THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF DOBHAṢI LITERATURE IN BENGAL, UP TO 1855 A.D.

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the emergence of a mixed diction in Bengal and its development as a vehicle of literature. The mixed diction which was much later to be known as Dobhāṣī sprang from the mixture of two cultures - Muslim and Hindu.

The first two chapters are concerned with political and social changes in Bengal after the arrival of the Muslim invaders. Note has been made of the new literary themes, many of them drawn from the literatures of Arabia and Persia, which were introduced in Bengal by poets of Islamic faith from the 14th century onward. It has been pointed out that these themes are quite different from the themes handled by Hindu poets. In Chapter III reference is made to the first appearance in Bengali literature of a mixed diction which derived part of its vocabulary from Bengali and Sanskrit and part from Arabic and Persian. This mixed diction is first observed in the compositions of Hindu poets. Contemporary Muslim writers used Bengali exclusively except for occasional passages in Brajabuli. Chapter IV outlines the adoption of mixed diction by Muslim poets and contains a brief summary of the works which were written in it.

In Chapters V, VI and VII a detailed examination is

made of the principal poets of the 18th and 19th centuries and of the language and subject matter of their major works.

The remainder of the thesis is devoted to a critical analysis of Dobhāṣī diction and the literature which was written in it. In Chapter VIII report is made of the opinions of earlier critics. In Chapter IX the problem of the origin of the name 'Dobhāṣī' is considered. Chapter X deals in some detail with the influence of Arabic, Persian and Hindustani on Bengali language and Chapter XI reviews the attitudes of Muslim society towards the language both of speech and literature. Chapter XII surveys the tradition of literary diction in India and the place of Dobhāṣī in that tradition. Chapter XIII is a summary of the history of the growth of Dobhāṣī from its first beginning in the 14th century to its acceptance as a literary language in the 19th.

Acknowledgements.

I prepared this thesis under the guidance of my teacher Mr. T. W. Clark, who with patience, generosity, wisdom and keen personal interest has supervised my work. I believe that the debt of gratitude a student owes to his teacher is unlimited, and that words are insufficient to express it. All I can say is that I gratefully remember his wisdom and affection, the touch of which made my stay in this country a happy occasion in my life.

I should also like to take this opportunity of thanking the authorities of the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the British Museum, the India Office and Cambridge University Libraries for their help and co-operation.

Furthermore I must say how sincerely grateful I am to my colleagues and former teachers, Dr. M. Ahmed, Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajshahi and Dr.M.E.Haq, Director, Central Board for Development of Bengali, Dacca, who though far away from here have always shown a keen interest in my work, and sent me so many letters of encouragement.

I thank Mrs. E.W.Garland for so carefully typing the manuscript.

Transliteration

a	(অ)	ā	(আ)	i	(ই)	ī	(ঈ)	u	(উ)	ū	(ঊ)	ṛ		
e	(এ)	ai	(ঐ)	o	(ও)	au	(ঔ)							
k	(ক)	kha	(খ)	g	(গ)	gh	(ঘ)	ṅ	(ঙ)					
c	(চ)	ch	(ছ)	j	(জ)	jh	(ঝ)	ñ	(ঞ)					
ṭ	(ট)	ṭh	(ঠ)	ḍ	(ড)	ḍh	(ঢ)	ṇ	(ণ)					
t	(ত)	th	(থ)	d	(দ)	dh	(ধ)	n	(ন)					
p	(প)	ph	(ফ)*	b	(ব)	bh	(ভ)	m	(ম)					
y	(য)	r	(র)	l	(ল)	b	(ব)							
ś	(শ)	ṣ	(ষ)	s	(স)	h	(হ)	ý	(য়)					
ṛ	(ড়)	ṛh	(ঢ়)	ṃ	(ং)	ḥ	(ঃ)	˜	(ঁ)					
kṣ	(ক্ষ)													

* ফ is also used for this character in certain Perso-Arabic words

CHAPTER I

Medieval Bengali Literature and Political Change

The growth of vernacular literature in the Aryan North of India has always been impeded by Sanskrit, as is evidenced by its comparatively late commencements in the Aryan North of India, where Sanskrit predominated and its comparatively early commencement in the Dravidian South, where the influence of Sanskrit was not so powerful initially. Tripathi confirms the views as follows: "Tamil, Canarese and Telegu are comparatively rich in epigraphic materials dating from an early period. Unlike the North Indian languages they were relatively free from the dominating influence of Sanskrit and as such, they developed literatures at a comparatively early period."[1] Sanskrit is no mere language; it is the symbol and vehicle of Hindu religion and culture, which rest on and foster a rigid hierarchy of exclusive social classes. Sanskrit was the key to the sacred texts and was permitted to one class alone, the Brahmins. Thus in a narrow sense Sanskrit was the symbol of the prestige and power of this one class; they valued it accordingly, and resisted vehemently any threat to the source of their power and privilege.

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1. Tripathi, K.B. Evolution of Oriya Language and Script, Utkal University, 1962, p.v.

On the other hand, the other creeds which made inroads into Northern India; Buddhism, Islam and Christianity were egalitarian. They held that their sacred trusts were for the edification of the whole of society, not just its uppermost stratum. Consequently it is hardly surprising to find that the impulses to propagate vernacular literature in the Aryan North came from the followers of these egalitarian creeds in their respective periods. The first vernacular literature in North India, for instance, was Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures. There are strong reasons to believe that the Muslims played a large part in initiating medieval vernacular literature in North India. "There are almost no compositions of the early period (11th-13th century) in the New Indo-Aryan (i.e.vernacular) languages other than Bengali. The one or two songs and distiches, that have reached us preserved in a more or less altered form in later collections, are predominantly the works of Muslim poets. Consequently one might conjecture with some certainty that in Sind and the Panjab literary composition in the vernaculars was first undertaken by Muslims."[1] As in the macrocosm of North India, so in the microcosm of Bengal. The Tantrik Buddhists composed

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1. Sen,S. Islāmi Bāṅglā Sāhitya, Burdwan, 1951, p.I.

the first songs in the early vernacular of Bengal i.e., the Caryāścaryabiniścay; the Muslims commissioned the first translations from Sanskrit and the Christians at a later period created the first grammar and prose.[1]

But to view the beginning of vernacular literature merely within this context of religion is to limit one's vision too narrowly; politics had had important bearings on this question, for there was a strong relationship between political power, religion and literature in Bengal. The Pala Kings favoured the Buddhists who as was stated above, first cultivated vernacular literature in Bengal. The Sena kings patronised the Brahmin pandits, who in turn cultivated Sanskrit literature. The Pathans and Moghals who were Muslims patronised both Hindu and Muslim poets, who cultivated vernacular literature a century or two later. The British were Christians and under British rule, the missionaries in their efforts to propagate Christianity helped to create the first prose. Since it is rare for rulers to do anything that does not actively encourage the continuance of that rule, it may be assumed that this relationship between politics, religion and literature either benefited the ruling classes or at least did not militate against their interests. After any major

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1. Sen, D.C. History of Bengali Language and Literature, Calcutta University, 1911, pp. 5-15.

change in that political context, drastic changes also are liable to occur in the contexts of religion and literature and this is borne out by what evidence is available in medieval India.

The evidence indicates that after any major change in political power, religious persecutions tended to follow[1] presumably to stamp out allegiances to the old regime and to establish allegiance to the new. In some instances the old literature was suppressed and actively discouraged for the same reason. Scholars believe for example that when the Sena dynasty succeeded the Pala kings, Buddhists were put to the sword. The following extract from Sankar-vijay regarding King Sudhanvā will show the ruthless manner in which the Buddhists were sometimes persecuted - "Many of the chief princes, professing the wicked doctrines of the Buddhist and the Jaina religions, were vanquished in various scholarly controversies. Their heads were then cut off with axes, thrown into mortars and broken to pieces (reduced to powder) by means of pestles. So these wicked doctrines were thoroughly annihilated, and the country made free from danger."[2] It is likely that the Senas also suppressed the vernacular literature cultivated by Buddhists.

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1. Except at the beginning of British rule.
2. Sen, D.C. op.cit., p.6.

Sen refers to this subject - "Several works written in the tenth and the eleventh centuries of the Christian era in a very old form of Bengali have lately been discovered by Mahāmahopādhyāya Hara Prasād Śāstrī in Nepal.....They appear to be but poor fragments of a literature which owes its origin chiefly to the earnestness of the Tantrik Buddhists for popularizing their creed."[1] From this one can infer that these texts were carried to Nepal as a result of the suppression of Buddhism in Bengal.

The Senas beginning with Vikramāditya[2] patronised Sanskrit. Sena kings were "very devoted to Brahminism and before the Muslim conquest the Court of Bengal was dominated by the Brahmins and their religion."[3] Brahmin pandits resided at Court and composed, recited and expounded their poetry to their princely patrons. The skill of these poets in manipulating grammar, poetry and logic was great but their "contempt for Bengali was as great as was their scholarship in Sanskrit."[4] However, the next major change in the political sphere altered all this.

Muslim rule commenced in Bengal in 1204 A.D.[5] The

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1. Sen.,D.C.op.cit.,p.5.
2. Sen.,D.C. Ibid.,p.9.
3. Sen.,S. Bangālā Sāhityer Itihās,Vol.I (2nd edition), Calcutta, 1948, p.58.
4. Sen,D.C.,Ibid.,p.9.
5. Stewart,C. The History of Bengal, London, 1813,pp.43-44.

last Hindu King, Laksman Sena of the Sena dynasty fled and presumably a period of Brahmin persecution followed. However, by the fourteenth century, Muslim rule was well established. Moreover the ties of Delhi's suzerainty over Bengal were being severed and Bengal's Muslim rulers were beginning to identify themselves with their subjects; ruler and ruled were being drawn together by the ties of a common birth place and a common tongue, Bengali.[1]

It was within this political context that writing in Bengali began to be encouraged. Translations from Sanskrit were commissioned by royal patrons and poets were most generously patronised in their cultivation of the various indigenous themes that were becoming popular in Bengali literature. Possibly the motivation behind the patronage of literature was political. The Muslim rulers may have wished to destroy the dominance of Sanskrit and thereby the hold of the Brahmins over the people, thus with one well-aimed stone disposing of two political birds of prey, Brahminism and the Brahmins. There is evidence in

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1. Sen,D.C.op.cit,p.10. As regards Muslim rulers becoming Bengali by birth and tongue it is interesting to note the suggestion put forward by M.E.Haq, that the first Muslim infiltration into Bengal dates from a considerably earlier period."From the 8th century A.D.the blood of a new race beg to be mixed up with the Bengali blood;the people of the Semitic race began to enter Bengal from that date.The recent di covery of a coin of Calip Harun-al-Rashid (786-809) in Pahar pur,Rajshahi has established the fact that the Semitic Arab Muslims were preaching their religion as well as carrying on business in this country;they had also established a small principality in Chittagong district under an Amir.Several sa Sah Sultan Bayazid Bistami (874 A.D.),Mir Saiyad Sultan/

contd.overleaf.

certain texts of this period which suggests that the people of the lower order were not unhappy to see the Muslims turn against the Brahmins. In some instances they saw in the destruction of Brahmin temples and in the killing of the Brahmins the actions of their own deities, even to the extent of regarding Muslim warriors as Hindu gods appearing in different guises to kill the Brahmins who were oppressing the people. In a song connected with the Dharma Cult, Jālāli Kālimā, which commemorates the conquest of Jājpur, a city in Orissa in the middle of the fourteenth century[1] the following statement is found. I translate as follows: "There are 1600 Brahmin families in the City of Jājpur. The Brahmins read the Vedas but are evil men. They beg alms and if any householder refuses them they curse him and cause his house to be burnt down. They collect taxes in Malda and they make no concession to any one. There is no end to the mischief they cause. They band together in groups of ten and twenty

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contd. from previous page....

Mahmud Mahi-soar (1047A.D.),Sah Mohammad Sultan Rumi (1053 A.D.)., Baba Adam Ṣahid (1119 A.D.) Sah Niamat Ullah Butsi-kan and many others were preaching Islam in Bengal during the period of early Muslim Settlement there." Muslim Bāṅlā Sāhitya,Dacca,1957,pp.3-4.

1. Sen,S.,op.cit.,pp.495-96.The City of Jājpur in Orissa was a great centre of the Hindu upper castes and the Sultan of Bengal Shamsuddin Iliās Śāh (1342-57 A.D.) established his authority there in the middle of the 14th century.See. Sarkar,J.N.,The History of Bengal.,Dacca University,1948, pp.103-5..

and subvert the good. They chant the Vedas vociferously, carry flaming torches and they terrify every one. O Dhamma, the Brahmins are destroying your creation. This is great injustice. None but you can save us. Knowing this in his heart Dhamma forsook Kailās (heaven) and came to earth, disguised as Khandakār, in the form of a Muslim wearing a black cap, carrying a bow and arrow and mounted on a fine horse and uttering the name of 'Khodā'. His appearance was terrifying.....All the Hindu gods were delighted and dressed as Muslims. Brahmā became Mohāmmad, Viṣṇu became the prophet, Śiva became Ādam, Ganeś became Kāji, Kārtik became Gāji, the Hindu ascetics became Fakirs." It is also possible that the Muslim rulers were seeking to acknowledge and strengthen their ties of kinship with their subjects and to gain political support against Delhi, or possibly because of human considerations which inevitably grow when people live together.

It is noteworthy, however, that the first poets patronised by the Muslim rulers were, as their names imply, mostly Hindu. It is equally noteworthy that they commissioned works not only from Persian but also from Sanskrit sources including the Purānas, the Mahābhārat, the Rāmāyaṇ and the legends of Kṛṣṇa, which together form the greater part of

the corpus of Hindu literature. Writing on these subjects D.C.Sen states that the Muslim Kings of Bengal and their officers not only cultivated writing in Bengali but were interested in Bengali literature "which they spoke and understood"[1] for its own sake. The following list shows how extensive Muslim patronage was during the period of their dominance: (a) Nāsir Shāh (1285-1325 A.D.) commissioned a translation of the Mahābhārat by a poet whose name is not known but who is supposed to be a Hindu[2](b) Giāsuddin (1389-1409 A.D.) patronised Vidyāpati to compose short lyrics on Vaiṣṇava themes:[3] (c) Giāsuddin also patronised Sāh Mohāmmad Sagīr to compose a narrative poem Iuchaf-Jalikhā from a Persian source:[4] (d) Husain Shāh (1493-1519 A.D.) was a great patron of Bengali and patronised many poets for the cultivation of literature. He conferred the title of 'yaśo rāj Khān' on Dāmodar Sen who composed lyric songs on Vaiṣṇava themes and first employed Brajabulī diction in Bengali literature:[5](e) Husain Shāh patronised Bipradās Piplāi who wrote Manasābijaý, a poem on the deity of snakes,

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1. Sen, D.C., op.cit.,p.11.
2. Sen, D.C., oibidt., p.11.
3. Sen, D.C., oibidt.,p.11.
4. Haq,M.E.Muslim Bāngla Sāhitya, Dacca,1957,p.57.
5. Sen,S., A History of Brajabuli Literature, Calcutta University, 1935, p.2.

in 1495-96:[1] (f) Parameśvaṇdās who was a court poet of Parāgal Khān, a general and governor of Husain Shāh, translated the Mahābhārat and got the title of 'Kabindra' from his master:[2](g) Parāgal Khān's son Nasrat Khān was also a governor of the King of Bengal. He commissioned his court poet Śrīkar Nandī to translate the Mahābhārat:[3] (h) Husain Shāh's grandson Firuz Shāh commissioned his court poet Śrīdhar to write Bidyāsundar, a narrative poem:[4] (i) Rukunuddin Barbak Shāh "conferred the sobriquet of 'guṇarāj Khān' on Māladhar Basu who composed Śrīkṛṣṇabijay, a narrative poem on the Kṛṣṇa legend in 1480:"[5] (j) a number of poets wrote lyric poetry on Vaiṣṇava themes who were "serving in various capacities at the court of Gauḍ" i.e., the Court of the Muslim King of Bengal.[6] Indeed, the Muslim rulers seem at this period to have exercised considerable religious tolerance. They even accepted without demur compliments comparing them to Hindu gods. Parāgal Khān was called the incarnation of Hari in Kaliyug ('Kali Kāle habu yena Kṛṣṇa abatār') by his protégé, Kabindra Parameśvar who translated the Mahābhārat.

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1. Sen,S.,Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol.I,2nd.ed.,Calcutta, 1948, p.118.
2. Sen,S.,History of Bengali Literature,New Delhi,1960,p.80.
3. Sen,S.,ibid.,pp.80-81.
4. Sen,S. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās,vol.I.2nd ed.,Calcutta, 1948,p.564.
5. Sen,S.,History of Bengali Literature,New Delhi,1960,p.69.
6. Sen,S.,ibid.,p.103.

This patronage can of course be interpreted as part of the rulers' overriding political motives, namely to create a sense of political unity in Bengal undisturbed by religious antagonism; but in the view of the present writer this would seem to be a cynical interpretation, for though ulterior motives are difficult always to exclude, there are strong reasons to believe that the Muslim patrons were genuinely interested in the poetry they patronised and also in the wider well-being of their subjects as a whole. The literary critic however, must go beyond establishing the political and social background against which this literature was written. He is concerned with the quality of this literature. He has to determine whether it was religious or secular but most of all whether it was good of its kind. Much of this writing was in one sense of the term, translation. We find versions of the Mahābhārat and the Rāmāyan for instance but the Bengali works are by no means literal or even near literal translations. They are re-creations based on the same myths as the original Sanskrit or Persian. The plane of events in the Sanskrit versions, for instance, is very different from that in the Bengali. In the former the interest centres on the deities who are ideal beings breathing a moral atmosphere; in the latter the interest centres on human beings treading the soil

of Bengal who though they are gods in name can only be recognised as such by the divine trappings they wore or the occasional supernatural power they displayed. This enhancement of human interest is the predominant characteristic of the literature of the period. Possibly it got infused into the literature by the interests of the Muslim patrons[1] or possibly it was the inevitable result of the translations from the conservative Sanskrit to the homeliness of Bengali; but whatever the reason it constitutes the one unifying characteristic, which marks the productions of both Hindus and Muslims in this early period of Muslim rule and patronage.

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1. Scholars believe that Islam as a religion played an important part in Bengal in the period of Muslim rule. Before the establishment of Muslim authority the people, both upper and lower, were greatly degenerated. "Superstitious belief and derogatory practices", S.Sen observes, "were slowly destroying the initiative spirit of the people both high and low...The gulf between the upper and lower classes was widening. The Muslim impact struck a stunning blow to the self-complacency of the ruling classes and of the priesthood." History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi,1960,p.39. The impact of Islam which came not only through the rulers but also through the missionaries led to a loosening of the bonds of caste and religious rituals and was not unwelcomed by the people of Bengal. "There are many evidences to prove",D.C.Sen observes, "that the earlier days of Mohamedan conquest, the Hindus tried to assimilate the best elements of Islam in their religion. Some of the Mohammedan pirs and fakirs, especially a band of Aulias who came from Arabia, lent their powerful support in bringing about this happy union in the 15th and 16th centuries." - Eastern Bengal Ballads, Calcutta University,1923, Vol.IV., part I,pp.xxxii-iii.

Another point of interest in this period is the status of Bengali as a language. Hitherto the Brahmin pandits despised all vernacular languages and condemned translation from Sanskrit into them.[1] They predicted damnation not only for all who heard Sanskrit works in translation but also the language into which they were translated. The Bengali language was derived from a Prakrit known as Gauḍa Prakrit. The Brahmin pandits labelled it contemptuously 'Paiśāci Prākrit', or the Prākrit spoken by the evil spirits. It was Kṛṣṇa Paṇḍit who for one so described it 'in his celebrated grammar Prākrita-Chandrikā'[2] in the twelfth century. So successful indeed was the pandits' 'indoctrination' and 'propaganda machine' in these respects that the vernacular poets themselves were induced to confess the unworthiness of their medium. "We frequently come across such lines in old Bengali works as 'naturally Bengali poems are faulty' ('sahaje pāc̃ālī gīt nānā doṣmaý') or 'not fit to be discussed in a vernacular poem' ('pāc̃ālīte nahe yogyabād')."[3]

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1. The following well known Sanskrit couplet bears testimony to this ill-will: "If a person hears the stories of eighteen Purānas or of the Rāmāyaṇa recited in Bengali he will be thrown into the hell called the Raurava." - History of the Bengali Language and Literature, D.C.Sen, C.U, 1911, p.7.
2. Sen, D.C., op.cit., p.4.
3. Sen, D.C., ibid., p.8.

No one would be so rash as to claim that these attitudes of the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin as regards vernacular literature changed overnight, with the commencement of Muslim patronage. On the contrary, they persisted in more or less acute form for centuries. For instance, Rājā Rāmmohan Rāy provoked storms of abuse and criticism from orthodox Brahmins, when he started translating Hindu scriptures in the early 19th century. But on the other hand, there is no great evidence that the Brahmins were totally indifferent to their own best interests. Undoubtedly they missed the courtly patronage of the Hindu Senas and were not slow to accept that offered by Muslims, even though it might involve writing in the despised vernaculars. This fashion of patronising vernacular literature inaugurated by the Muslim Courts was undoubtedly continued later in Hindu principalities. In conclusion a statement by D.C.Sen may be quoted: "We now confidently presume that the above proofs will be held sufficient to support the view that the patronage and favour of the Mahomedan Emperors and Chiefs gave the first start towards recognition of Bengali in the courts of the Hindu Rajas and to establish its claims on the attention of scholars."[1]

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1. Sen.,D.C.,op.cit.,pp.14-15.

CHAPTER II

Contributions of Muslim poets to Middle Bengali Literature.

There are reasons to believe that the language we now know as Bengali began to emerge early in the second Millenium A.D., though the earliest extant texts in that language are probably not as early as that. Bengali literature, that is to say literature in the Bengali language, is broadly divisible into three periods: Old Bengali which can be assigned to the 11th and 12th centuries A.D.; Medieval Bengali, which runs continously from the 14th to the 18th century; and Modern Bengali, which is usally dated from 1800 A.D. Nothing which can be assigned to the 13th century has survived, so it is not possible to say with certainty whether that century belongs to the old or the Medieval period.

The literature of the first two periods was exclusively verse. Prose writing of a literary quality was not developed in Bengal until the 19th century.

Medieval Bengali literature flourished under Muslim rul Bengal remained under Muslim rule till the Middle of the 18th century.[1] So far as the literary products are concerned this period is prosperous and quite a number of literary streams wer cultivated by Hindu and Muslim poets which have enriched the

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1. The political authority of Bengal was gradually transferred to the East India Company after the battle of Plassey (1757)

volume of Bengali literature and added variety and beauty to it

In this Chapter a short account of the principal streams and themes introduced and developed by Muslim poets during the Medieval period will be attempted together with some references to their style and language. We shall also examine the similarities and differences, if any, between their language and that of contemporary Hindu poets.

The Old Bengali period was pre-Muslim, and for that reason lies outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, as certain literary features of the work of that period are continued in the next, it is necessary to comment briefly on them. The only work in Bengali which can with certainty be assigned to the pre-Muslim period is a collection of some 47 religious lyrics composed by some 24 poets.[1] The famous Gitagovinda by Jaýadeva must be excluded because it is written in Sanskrit not Bengali. The manuscript containing these poem

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1. Some ballads like Maýnāmatīrgan or Gopicandrergān, certain distiches and short poems containing agricultural maxims and and comments on life and on things are believed to be compos by Dāk and Khanā during Old Bengali period (Sen,D.C. - Histo of Bengali Language and Literature, Calcutta University, 191 Chapter II). But these were collected in the early part of the 20th century from the mouths of the people and their language and form is not very old. "It is impossible", observes Suniti Kumar Chatterji, "on both philological and literary grounds to relegate them to any period before 1400: Although their lost prototypes, models or originals might quite reasonably be regarded as having belonged to the 14th or even the 13th century". - (Chatterji, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Vol.I Calcutta Universi 1926, p.132)

was discovered by Haraprasād Sāstrī in Nepal at the beginning of the present century. The poems are short: 44 have 10 lines and 3 have 14. One couplet usually the final one, known as the bhanitā, contains the name of the author. The use of the bhanitā continued throughout the Medieval period. The metres used are early forms of the paỷār and tripadī, which are the standard metrical forms of much of the composition of the later period. That they were composed to be sung is proved by the attachment to each of the name of the rāga in which they were to be sung. The language used is proto-Bengali, which according to Sukumar Sen marks the transition period when "the language was just evolving out of Laukika (or Avahattha)".[1]

The history of these lyrics is little known, but it is usually held that they were "mystic practice" songs, composed by the Siddhas, or Tantrik Buddhists, whose names appear in the bhanitās, to teach their religious philosophy to their disciples. The commentator, Mallinātha, whose commentary is contained in Sāstrī's manuscript, describes the language as Sandhyābhāṣā, i.e., twilight language. It is certainly a kind of code language with a meaning at two levels. The outward meaning was for non-initiate , the inner meaning only for genuine students of the cult. The purpose of this linguistic device was "to disguise the inner meaning which recorded the

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1. Sen, S. - History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p

mystic practice, experience and emotion of the masters in their process of self-realization".[1]

It is important for the student of literary history to note that the form and content of the caṛyā songs, as they are now called, continued to influence the literature of the later period. As S.Sen observes, "The form as well as the subject-matter of the caṛyā songs did not die out with the disappearance of Buddhist Tantricism. They re-appear with the necessary changes in the 16th century and later in the 'ragatmika' (belonging to mystic lore) songs of Vaiṣṇava Tantrists generally known as Bauls (madmen)".[2] What is important from our point of view is that the caṛyā songs belong to that branch of literature which can be called religious literature.

As has been stated above Middle Bengali Literature covers a period of about 500 years and comprises a large volume of poetical literature. So great was the volume and the quality of this literature that an Eauropean critic was moved to say of Bengali that it was "one of the great expressiv languages of the world capable of being the vehicle of as great things as of any speech of men".[3] Within this literature

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1. Sen, S. - op.cit., p.31
2. Sen, S. - Ibid., p.36
3. Anderson, J.D., quoted by Ronaldshay in the 'Forward' in East Bengal Ballads, Vol.I, part I, Calcutta University, 1923

a variety of subjects were treated; some of them were treated exclusively by Hindu poets, other by Muslim poets; but some were cultivated by poets from both communities. This thesis is concerned principally with the writings of Muslim poets but in order to see these writings in their full perspective it is necessary to give a brief survey of the works of Hindu poets during this period.

The works of Hindu poets during the Medieval period fall into two main categories: Narrative and Lyric. The narrative poems are popularly called pā̃cālī, a term which it is difficult to define precisely. According to S.Sen it originally meant 'doll' or 'puppet'. The same writer argues that the use of the name indicates that in the early stages songs were sung and poems chanted with the support of a puppet show which enacted the story.[1] It is clear that the narrative poems were from the beginning accompanied by some form of actin or gesturing on the part of the singer and probably by the beating of drums and cymbals. Hindu narrative poetry falls into three streams: (a) Mahākābya, (b) Maṅgal Kābyą, (c) Biography. The Mahākābya poems are based on the legends of the Mahābhārat and the Ramāẏaṇ. They are not in any sense translations from the Sanskrit work on the same subject but original versions drawn from the same sources and presented against a background of Bengali life and landscape. Rām and

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.24

Sītā of the Rāmāyaṇ, for example are Bengalis. They marry according to Bengali rites and their domestic relationship is governed by rules well-known in Bengali society. The countryside over which the action ranges is essentially Bengali. Thes poems were composed in the paẏār and tripadī metre which was foreshadowed in the cariyā songs mentioned above.[1]

The poems known as Maṅgal Kābya are greater in number and draw upon a wider range of subjects than the Mahākābya. The term Maṅgal Kābya has never been convincingly defined but it would seem that part of the literal meaning of the word (maṅgal) is retained in that the poems are clearly written to propitiate certain deities and win favour for their devotees. Among the deities represented are Caṇḍi, the wife of the god Śiva; Manasā, an indigenous snake goddess; Dharmaṭhākur, an early deity; Sitalā, the goddess of smallpox; Dakṣin Rāẏ, the god of tigers, and many others. Most of these poems, we are told, were written under the direct order of the deity concerned who appeared to the author either in a dream or in disguise. Many of the poems are similar in structure. The deity selected an agent or agents and having convinced him or them of the truth and power of his or her cult instructed and empowered them to win converts to the new cult. Where wealth was required it

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1. see page No. 23 of the present thesis.

was provided; where fighting was involved the heroes had divin support and protection, and in the end succeeded in establishi the cult to the deities' satisfaction.

The biographical poems which form the third stream of narrative poetry are concerned with the life and teaching of the saint Caitanya who in the course of his lifetime came to be regarded as divine. These poems contain in addition to the narrative material lengthy expositions of the Vaiṣṇava cult preached by Caitanya.

It is important to note that both the Mahākābya and th Maṅgal Kābya are in one sense religious poems. Their recitati was from the beginning associated with certain religious festivals and it was generally believed that merit accrued to both the singer and the audience. The religious intention of the Bengali poems is not strongly or consistently maintained as it is in poems on comparable subjects in other North Indian languages. Rām is certainly a god in Krittibās's famous versi of the Rāmāyaṇ but his godhood is not so consistently emphasis as it is in Tulsidās's version of the poem in Hindi or Bhānubhakta's version in Nepali. It is the human aspect of Rām and Sītā which appeals most strongly to a Bengali audience Similarly in the Maṅgal Kābya where, though the principal characters are often incarnated deities, the interest of the audience is in the humanity. Behulā for instance is the model

of Hindu wifehood. Nevertheless, though the use of the term religious in connection with these poems has to be accepted wi very real qualifications, the conclusion that they are fundamentally religious poems, written with a religious intent cannot be avoided.

The great part of the lyric poems which form the secon part of the main category, have as their subject the līlā or divine play between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In one very famous work, śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan, the lyrics are composed in sequence and involv a tenuous narrative. The majority of the poems are, however, single compositions which present a single mood in the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. After the advent of Caitanya Deb and his ultimate apotheosis he began to be associated with Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā as a unified incarnation of both. The Vaiṣṇava lyrics or padābalī as they came to be called[1] which were composed after his death form a very large proportion of Medieval Bengali literature. It must be pointed out that though many of these poems were composed in an artific literary dialect known as Brajabuli they are regarded as falli within the corpus of Bengali literature. These poems too, whe

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1. Vaiṣṇava lyric songs are called pada and the composers are called Mahajan. The word pada actually means a couplet. But from the 18th century the collection of Vaiṣṇava songs are called padābalī or collection of songs. Thus it changed the older meaning of pada and created a new meaning - Vaiṣṇava poetry or song. The poets of these songs are generally call Mahājan which means pious man. Thus the Vaiṣṇava songs acquired a new name - Mahājan padabalī or songs composed by pious men. (Sen,S. - Bāngālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol.I (Second edition) Calcutta, 1948, p.278)

in Bengali or Brajabuli are unquestionably religious poems. It is true that in Śrīkṛṣṇakīrtan the human aspect of the relation between the two lovers is more in evidence than the divine, the work as a whole has a religious significance.

Obviously during the Middle Bengali period Hindu poets introduced a large number of themes and constructed a large volume of literature. But all of them composed on subjects directly related to gods or goddesses. The main object of their writings was the glorification of their deities and the propagation of their religious doctrines and they did not devia from this tendency. It will be shown in the later pages that the introduction of secular subjects in Bengali literature was a Muslim innovation. S.N.Ghosal presents this argument as follows: "The first deviation from this tendency in Bengali literature to compose poems either about paurānic, devotional stories, or centred round the concepts of religion or based on the glorification of gods and goddesses occurred in the compositions of Muslim poets. There is no doubt, it is to the Muslim poets that the credit for breaking away from the monotony which had pervaded Bengali literature for so long, and for introducing poems composed on unadulterated love stories of a new type belongs. But these Muslim poets were not content merely to break away from the tendency to compose purely religious poems; they created a new era in Bengali literature

by the introduction of fresh, new stories from Persian and ancient Hindi literature. It is not in the least wrong to call Muslim poets the creator of a new literary age in Bengali literature."[1]

It also appears from the history of the vernacular literature of India and Pakistan that Muslim writers had a more secular outlook than either Buddhists or Hindus. They, however composed poems on their religious themes but the main differen of their outlook from that of Buddhists or Hindus is that they did not confine their literary efforts to religion. Even in t formative stage of vernaculars they cultivated secular literatu S.Sen observes: "In the Apabhraṃśa period, romantic narrative poems and love ballads were very fashionable. This stream was introduced by the Muslim poets. Hindu poets were predominantly preoccupied with devotional stories for the glorification of their deities; they paid no attention to secular love poems. Vernacular literature was a mere off-shoot of religious literatu as far as Hindu poets were concerned. But to the Muslims religion was not necessarily related to literature; consequentl they were absolutely free to compose non-devotional narratives. Thus in the composition of romances in both Bengali and Hindi literature, it was the Muslim poets who were foremost and supreme".[2]

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1. Ghosal,S.N., (Edited) Satī Mayṇā O L or Candrānī, Biśvabharati, Śāntiniketan, 1955, Introduction, p.I
2. Sen,S. Islāmi Bāṅglā Sāhitya, Burdwan, 1951, p.5

The bulk of poems written in Bengali by Muslim poets during the medieval period is much larger than is suggested by existing histories of Bengali literature. It covers many types of poetic creation and was contributed to by a large number of authors. It is convenient for the purposes of the short summary which is the subject of this chapter to analyse these poems in the following categories:

(a) Narrative poems,

(b) Lyric poems,

(c) Instructive, or Didactic poems,

(d) Elegiac poems.

Narrative poetry can be further sub-divided into the following classes according to subject matter and the intention of the poets. These classes embrace (a) Romances, which are based on Perso-Arabic and Indian source material; (b) Narrative poems which bear considerable resemblance to the Hindu pāñcālī or maṅgal poems in respect of both content and manner of presentation; (c) Stories which have some right to be regarded as historical; (d) Poems, now known as Ballads, which are based on local legends and incidents.

Narrative poems.

So far as can be traced the first narrative poem to be written by a Muslim poet is the work of Sāh Maḥammad Sagīr, who lived during the reign of Giās-ud-Din (1389-1409), to whom he

dedicated his work.[1] The poem is a romance on the subject of Ichuf and Jalikhā. The introductory portion of the poem cont the information that the story was derived from the Koran and Ketāb.[2] The latter word in Bengali is used of books which are written in Arabic or Persian. The author's purpose, also conveyed in the introduction, was to give his readers or his audience an opportunity to hear a love story which would give them pleasure.[3] In other words his object was to compose a purely secular poem. The author's debt to the Koran, and through the Koran to the Old Testament, is slight, for in nei of these versions can the story be regarded as a romance. Th credit for its development into a long and popular romance belongs to a number of Persian and Turkish poets, who must therefore be regarded as the primary source.[4]

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1. The poet says in the bandanā (introduction) of the poem - 'Mohammad sagīr tan añjaka adhīn' (tr.Mahammad Sagīr is a subordinate of his). It is however, not clear whether the poet was an officer or a court poet of the king.
2. The word Ketāb comes from the Arabic word Ketābun which mea book.
3. The poet says in the introduction of his poems: 'Ketāb Korā madhye dekhilu biśeṣ/ ichuf jalikh a kathā amiyā aśeṣ//Kahi Kitāb Cāhi sudhā ras puri/sunaha bhakatjan srutighat bhari/ (tr.In Korān and Persian book I found the sweet tale of Ich and Jalikhā. Following Persian book I shall tell (the story and fill it with poetic qualities.O devotees (of poetry) listen to it and fill your ear - (i.e. have pleasure from m poem).
4. This story was in vogue in mixed diction and we shall discu its origin in a subsequent Chapter.

Though Sagīr's sources were Perso-Arabic the atmosphere of his poem is Bengali. His characters are Bengali, apart from the names used, and the social customs and natural descriptions are also Bengali.

The second important poem on this subject is Ichuf-Jalikhā by Ābdul Hākim. The poet did not mention the date of composition of his poem but from internal evidence in the manuscript it may be assumed that he "belonged probably to the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century".[1] The poet says in his poem that he follows some Persian work but he does not mention either the name of the book or the author. The colouring of his poem also in entirely Bengali.

The love story of Lāilā and Majnu, the second important theme in Bengali romantic literature, was introduced into Bengali by Daulat Ujir Bāhrām Khān, whose poem, entitled Lāilāmajnu, was composed between 1545 and 1553.[2] The title Daulat Ujir means Finance Minister, and from references to himself in the poem it seems clear that the poet served under Nijām Sāh Sūr, governor of Chittagong and brother of Sher Shah, emperor of Delhi.

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1. Hussain, S.S. (Edited) A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscript, Dacca, 1960, p.268
2. Sharif, A. (Edited) Lāilamajnu, Dacca, 1957, Introduction, p.27

The story originated in Arabic and became very popular throughout the Muslim world. "In Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature the epithet al Madjuūn, i.e., 'the man possessed by a djinnī, 'the mad man', is pre-eminently associated with Kais le a Mulawwah, the story of whose passion for Lailā, daughter of Sa'd, a woman of the same tribe, is celebrated throughout the Muhammadan world". The original story in Arabic goes: "Kais meets Lailā amongst a party of women, falls in love at first sight and slaughters his camel to make a feast for her. His love is returned, but her father refuses to give her to him in marriage; and soon afterwards she becomes the wife of Ward b Muhammad al 'Ukaili. Kais, crazed with despair, passes the rest of his days in solitude, wandering half-naked in the hills and valleys of Nadjd, making verses on the subject of his unhappy love, and only seeing Lailā at rare intervals until his death".[1]

This love-tale of the desert of Arabia was developed into a popular theme in Persian literature by Nijām Ganjā who, as a result of the reputation of his lengthy poem Lāilā and Majnu which was written in 1188-89 is regarded as "the acknowledged master of romantic Mathnawi".[2] After his time the

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1. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.III, London, 1936, p.96
2. Browne, E.G. A Literary History of Persia, Cambridge Universit 1928, Vol.II, pp.400-1

theme became "one of the most popular, if not the most popular of all love stories in the East".[1] Many Persian poets cultivate it, the most celebrated of the being Amir Khusru (1253-1324) Mullā Nurud-Din Ābdur Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492) and Ābdullāh Hātifi of the 16th century.[2] Jami's work on Lailā and Majnu "Has been translated into French by Chésy (Paris, 1805) and into German by Hartman (Leipzig, 1807)".[3] Hātifi's poem was "published at Calcutta by Sir W.Jones in 1788".[4]

In Turkish literature Hamd Ullāh Chelebi whose pen name was Hamdī, completed his poem on Lailā Majnu in 1499-1500.[5] In this language the theme also became a popular subject of poems. The most important work in Turkish is that of Fazuli, in 1556.[6]

The story has since became very popular in Bengali especially among the Muslim community to whom Lāila and Majnu symbolise the noblest ideals of human love. Bāhrām Khān's poem however, is the only work on the theme which is known to belong to the medieval period. It is extremely popular but

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1. Browne, E.G. op.cit., p.406
2. Browne, E.G. Ibid., Vol.III, pp.108-9, 507, Vol.IV, p.229
3. Browne, E.G. Ibid., Vol.III, p.516
4. Browne, E.G., Ibid., Vol.IV, p.229
5. Gibb, E.J.W. A History of Ottoman poetry, London, 1902, Vol.II, p.172
6. Gibb, E.J.W. Ibid., Vol.III, p.85

it is impossible to be sure whether it was in fact the only poem written on the subject, or the only one which has survived. During the early modern period quite a number of works were composed on this theme both in prose and verse.

Saiýad Ālāol, the most famous poet at the court of Arakan during the 17th century, introduced two romantic themes based on Persian originals. The first, Sapta Paikar (Seven Portraits), is an adaptation of a work of the same title by Nijāmi Ganjā, the Persian poet of the 12th century and author of a poem on Lāilā and Majnu who was mentioned above. The poem is a collection of seven romantic stories told by seven queens, and in structure it bears some resemblance to the Arabian Nights. The explanation of the title gives an interesting introduction to the whole work: "The seven Portraits in question, discovered by Bahram one day in a secret chamber in his castle of Khawarnaq, represented seven princess of incomparable beauty, these being respectively the daughters of the Raja of India, the Khaqan of China, Shah of Khwarazm, The King of the Slavs, the Shah of Persia, the Emperor of Byzantine and the King of the West or 'Sun-set-land'. Bahram falls in love with these portraits and succeeding almost immediately afterwards to the throne vacated by the death of his father Yazdigrid, he demands and obtains these seven princess in marriage from their respective fathers. Each one

representing one of the seven climes into which the habitable world is divided, is lodged in a separate palace symbolically coloured, and Bahram visits each of them on seven successive days, beginning on Saturday with the Black Palace assigned to the Princess of India, and ending on Friday with the white Palace in which the Princess of the seventh clime is housed. Each of the seven Princesses entertains him in turn with stories, somewhat after the scheme of the Arabian Nights".[1]

Ālāol's second poem on a romantic theme is Saifulmulukbadiujjāmāl. He composed it in 1658-59. The story of it goes: "Saifulmuluk was the son of Sifun, King of Egypt. He fell violently in love with the portrait of Badiujjamal, daughte of the King of the Fairies in Iran-Bostan. Saifulmuluk's friend, Saiẏad who was the son of one of the King's courtiers told the King of his love. Thereupon emissaries were sent to different lands for information about Badiujjāmāl but they came back disappointed. Afterwards Saifulmuluk met Badiujjāmāl in a dream, and set out for Irān-Bostan accompanied by Saiẏad. Many adventures followed. Eventually, Saifulmuluk and Badiujjāmāl were united. Saiẏad married Badiujjāmāl's companion, Mallikā, princess of Sarandwip".[2] This story was

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1. Browne, E.G. op.cit., Vol.II, p.409
2. Hossain, S.S. (Edited) op.cit., p.507

derived from The Arabian Nights. It was first introduced into Bengali by Donāgāji in the middle of the 16th[1] century and many poets other than Ālāol made use of it. The following are remarkable who though they used different titles their poems are on the same theme of romantic love as Ālāol's Saifulmuluk-badiuijāmāl: Ābdul Hākim who lived in the 17th century and was the author of a Ichuf-Jalikhā; he composed Lālmatisaýfulmuluk. Saiad Mohammad Ākbar composed a poem named Jebulmuluk Sāmārukh in 1673. Gulebākāolī was composed by Naoýājeś Khān in the 17th century.

Another theme which is popular in Bengal narrates the story of a Roman Princess named Mallikā. She had promised to marry any man who could give correct answers to a thousand questions based on riddles and religious and social problems. The earliest known work on this theme is by Serbāj who named his poem Mallikār hājār soāl. The poet gave the poem a sub-title Fakkarnāmā because to quote a couplet from the poem - "there is a book in Persian called Fakkar nāmā and with the help of my spiritual guide I have made this story popular in Bengal".[2] According to M.E.Haq, Serbāj's poem was written

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1. Haq, M.E. Muslim Bānglā Sāhitya, Dacca, 1957, p.86
2. The poet says in the introduction of his poem - "fakkarnāmā name ek kitāb achila/pīrer prabhābe kichn pracār karila//"

in the second half of the 17th century.[1] Another important work on the same subject is Gadāmallikā by Sekh Sādi who named his poem after the hero and the heroine. The date given for his poem is 1715.

In the 16th century two romantic themes based on Indian originals were introduced into Bengali literature by Muslim poets. The first is the story of Prince Sundar and Princess Bidyā, and the earliest known poem by a Muslim poet on the subject is of Sābirid Khān. Khān's poem Bidyāsundar does not record any date of composition, but S.Sen has concluded from internal evidence that it was composed in the 16th century.[2]

The adventureous love of a Prince called Sundar with a Princess called Bidyā and their happy union and marriage is the main subject of the story. The origin of this theme is not known with certainty. According to S.Sen it was known in North West India at an early date and was brought to Bengal by the Muslim conquerors with whom it was a popular subject. It was made popular in the courts of Muslim Kings and chieftains

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.258
2. Sen,S. - Bāngala Sāhityer Itihās Vol.i (Second edition) Calcutta, 1948, p.545

by certain Sufi poets.[1] The story of Bidvāsundar became generally popular in Medieval Bengali literature and was adopted by a number of Hindu poets, the most famous of whom is Bhārat Candra Rāy whose poem on this subject was completed in 1753. At the hands of Hindu poets, however, the theme recieved different treatment. The story which at the hands of Muslim poets was and still is a secular love-story was changed into a Mangal Kābya to the goddess Kālikā. It was "transformed S.Sen observes "into a religious poem and a story of the glorification of a goddess".[2]

Sābirid's work which is not a religious poem has certain dramatic qualities. He calls his poem a nātgīt i.e., lyric drama. The poem itself is not constructed as a play but its division into pālās has some functional purpose like the division of a play into acts and scenes. It is not difficult to imagine that some of the pālās could have been acted, as they probably were, by jātrā parties.

Madhumālatī poems embody the second Indian love-story which was introduced into Bengal by Muslim poets during the 16th century. The first poet was Mohammad Kahir. The

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1. Sen, S. - op.cit., p.81
2. Sen, S. - Islami Bāngla Sāhitya, Burdwan, 1951, p.14

introduction to his poem contains the following couplet: "This beautiful story was in Hindi and I have made of it a pāñcāli in Bengali.[1] He does not however, give details of his source, beyond the statement that he came across it first in a Hindi version. According to M.E.Haq, Kabir's poem was written between 1578 and 1583.[2]

It is the love-story of Manohar, Prince of the Kaṅgirā Kingdom, who was brought to Madhumālatī, Princess of Mahārā's Kingdom of fairies. After a short meeting with the Princess, the Prince was carried back to his kingdom by the fairies while he was asleep. After many adventures and sufferings the Prince found his beloved and married her.

The origin of this story is not known. It is believed to have originated in the court of Bhoj, an ancient King of India,[3] works on this theme in Hindi are still extant, the best known being the 17th century compositions of Sekh Jumman and Sekh Manjhan. Mir Askari, a court poet of Aurangjeb composed Mihr-o-Māā in Persian on the same theme in 1655.[4] The story seems to have spread as far as Arkan for mention is made of it by Daulat Kāji in his poem Satimaṕnālorcandrānī; and its

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1. Text: "ehi se sundar kiechā hinditē āchila/désī bhaṣāý mui pāñcāli banila//"
2. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.97
3. Sharif, A. (Edited) Muhammad Kabīrbiracita Madhumālatī, Dacca, 1960, Introduction, p.'ca'
4. Sharif, A. Ibid., pp.'ja' and 'jha'

popularity continued into the 18th and 19th centuries.[1]

The court of Arakan, in which according to S.Sen "spoke a Tibeto Burma language" came into close cultural contact with Bengal "early in the fifteenth century when Narameikhla, the King of Arakan, dispossessed by the King of Burma, came to Bengal and took refuge in the court of Gaud (1404). After a sojourn of many years he was helped by Jalaluddin the Sultan of Bengal to regain his throne (1430)".[2] It is possible that the King developed a liking for Bengali literature during his stay in Bengal and introduced it in his court when he went back to his Kingdom. Gradually Bengali became the chief cultural language of Arakan and many poets cultivated Bengali literature in that court. The most distinguished of them are Daulat Kāji and Saiyad Ālāol both of whom wrote romances derived from Indian originals.

Daulat Kāji composed his only work Satīmaynālor-Candrānī some time between 1622 and 1638.[3] It was unfinished. He composed two thirds of it and the rest was completed by Ālāol in 1659.[4] It is a story of Lor, a King of Gohāri, who was married happily to Maynā. After some-time he saw a portrait

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1. The most remarkable poets of the 18th century are Sāker Māhmud and Saiad Hāmjā and of the 19th century are Muhammad Cuhar and Gopi Nāthdās.
2. Sen,S. Hisotry of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.149
3. Ghosal, S.N. op.cit., Introduction, p.7
4. Ghosal, S.N. Ibid., p.11

of Candrani, the Princess of Moharā, and was attracted by her beauty. He went to Mohrā and after facing many difficulties succeeded in securing the Princess as his wife. During Lor's absence a rich young man, Chātan, had fallen in love with Maýna and engaged an old woman to seduce her. But in spite of persistent efforts on the part of the old woman Maýna remained faithful to her husband, and ultimately after a long time of separation became re-united with him and the two wives lived happily together.

This romantic tale was current in the Maithili language and was popular in North and South Bihar as early as the 14th century. It was also current in Rajasthān. Daulat Kāji makes the following statement at the end of a eulogy to the King of Arakan.[1] "Sādhan composed poems in the Hindi caupāi. A number of people do not understand the gohārī dialect (gohārī bhāṣā) is the language of the poet). Compose in the vernacular in pācali metre, so that everyone will hear and understand and be glad. Then Kāji Daulat understood what

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1. "ṭheṭa canpāiýa doha kahila sadhane/ na bujhe gohārī bhāṣā kona kona jane// deśībhāṣe kaha tāke pāñc alīr chande/sakale suniya yena bujhaýe sānande// tabe kāji-daulat bujhiýa se ārati/pañcālīr chande kahe maýnār bhāratī//"

he had been asked to do and composed the story of Maýna in pãcali metre." The work by Sādhan referred to was a Rajasthan poem the "manuscripts of which have come to light recently".[1]

Padmābatī is one of the many works of Ālāol. It was composed sometime between 1645 and 1652.[2] It is a long story of Nāg Sen, King of Chitor, and of Padmābatī, Princess of Ceylon. The extraordinary beauty of Padmābatī, attracted Nāg Sen who went to Ceylon as a yogī and by showing his prowess and skill won her hand in marriage. After sometime a Tāntric scholar of the court of Nāg Sen was disgraced and banished by him. He went to Delhi where he extolled the ravishing beauty of Padmābatī to Ālauddin, the emperor, who asked Nāg Sen to send her to Delhi. This demand being refused the emperor attacked Chitor, defeated Nāg Sen and took him to Delhi as a captive. But he escaped and got back to Chitor. During his absence the King of Kumbhalaner attempted to seduce Padmābatī. When Nāg Sen heard of it he challenged him to a duel as a result of which Nāg Sen was mortally wounded and died. Padmābatī died a satī and was cremated on the same pyre as her husband. When Ālauddin entered into Chitor with his army the pyre was still smoking and hearing the tragic end of Padmābatī he paid

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., pp.150-51
2. Haq, M.E., op.cit., p.247

his homage before the pyre and returned to Delhi.

Ālāol adopted the story from a Hindi work named Padumāvat written in 1521 by Malik Muhammad Jaisī.[1]

The Maṅgalkābya type of poem has been described briefly in an earlier page.[2] It is true that the Muslim poets did not glorify gods and goddesses in quite the same way as the Hindu poets did. Differences of faith made this impossible. Neverthel they did endow the prophet Mohammad and his principal followers and certain saints with miraculous powers similar to those which characterise the various deities in the Maṅgalkābya. The same intention to convert non-believers was also present. There is no doubt that this type of narrative poetry is a natural outgrow of a mixed culture, in which Hindus and Muslims were living side by side and in close relationship with one another. It is clear also that Muslim poets recognized the popularity and effectivene of the Maṅgalkābya, and attempted to adapt them to their own purposes. M.E. Haq, comments as follows: "It comprises popular stories of a mythical or semi-historical nature. Following a tradition of their own these were the Muslim answer to the Hindu myth Inspired as they were by Hindu mythology, it must be said in fairness to these tales that they helped a great deal in the

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1. Sen, D.C. op.cit., p.622
2. See p. 24 of this chapter.

dissemination of Muslim culture in Bengal, carrying it almost to every home".[1] Like their Hindu counterparts these religious narratives are very lengthy, and like them they became popular among the common people to whom they were sung. Some of them enjoy an importance among Bengali Muslims similar to that enjoyed among Hindus by the Bengali versions of the Rāmāyaṇ and Mahābhārat.

The first poem which can be assigned to this category is the Rasul Bijaý of Jainiddin, who lived at the court of Ýusuf Shāh. The poem does not include the date of composition, but as the bhanitās make references to the poets' patron who ruled Bengal from 1474 to 1482, it is reasonable to assume that the poem was composed roughly during that period. The subject of Rasul Bijaý is the heroism and often miraculous exploits of the prophet of Islam. He wages war aginst non-believers, defeats them and finally converts them to Islam. Many later poets compdsed Rasul Bijaý, the most important of whom are Saiyad Sultān and Sābirid Khān in the 16th centruy, and Nasrullāh Khān and Shekh Cānd in the 17th century.

Two other poems by Saiyad Sultā n, Sabe Merāj and Nabibamśa, introduced new themes into this type of poem, themes which can be paralleled in the Hindu maṅgalkābya. The main story in Sabe Merāi concerns the ascent of the prophet into the

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.262

heavenly places. It contains a description of heaven and hell, and a number of conversations between him and other prophets and the angels. The poem Nabibaṃsa, which some regard as the poets' greatest work, begins with a creation myth and ends with the birth of the prophet of Islam. It is interesting to note that the Hindu gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Kṛṣṇa are presented as prophets of Allah. They receive their various scriptures from Allah and preach his religion. According to the poet all the preachers of the great religions were prophets of Allah, but when in the course of time the religion they taught became corrupt Mohammad was sent with the Koran to preach the true religion. This theme was followed by Hāýāt Māmood a poet of North Bengal, in Ambiýā bāṇī which was composed in 1758.

Many comparatively small works were written by Muslim poets on the legends of their religion. The following are worth mentioning: Ibliśnāmā by Sultān is a story of Satan, his disobedience to Allah and his efforts to mislead human beings from the path of religion. Nurnāma by Sekh Parān and Mīr Mahammad of the 17th century is a cosmogony, and Keýāmatnāmā of Shekh Cānd of the 17th century is an account of doomsday. Fātimārsuratnāmā by Serbāj, a poet of the late 17th century is written on the model of the Caṇḍīmaṅgal. The principal character is Fātimā, the daughter of the prophet Mahammad, who in character and action is reminiscent of deity Caṇḍi.

Another type of religious legend is introduced in Hānifā O Kaẏrā parī, a work attributed to Sābirid Khan of the 16th century who was also the author of a Bidvāsundar poem. The hero of the poem, Hānifā O Kaẏrā parī, is the son of Āli and grandson of the prophet Mahammad. He is depicted as a great warrior and the poem consists mainly of a series of warlike exploits, many of them campaigns against infidel Kings whom he defeated and converted to Islam. One important episode in this poem is Hānifā's campaign against a princess named Jaigun whom he defeated, converted to Islam and finally married. Another episode is of the nature of a fairy story. Hānifā was carried away one night by a fairy named Kaẏrā and transported to her kingdom. Hānifā's father Āli was informed of his son's abduction in a dream and went to his rescue. The Hānifā stories also form the subject of a work named Hānifār laṛāi by Muhammad Khān, a 17th century poet. It was popular also with Muslim poets of the 18th century whose work is examined later.

Another legend which also was destined to become popular was introduced in a poem entitled Āmirhāmjā. which was composed by Ābdun Nabi in 1684. This is an excessively lengthy poem running into 80 cantos. The poet was proud of the length of his poem of which he boasts somewhat naively: "Not to speak of writing such a big work people would even fear to read it".)[1]

1. Text: "thākuk lekhibe keha parite lāge ḍar"

The poem has many stories, descriptions of adventures and battles, all of which concern the imaginary exploits of Hāmjā, uncle of the prophet Mahammad. It is believed to be an adaptation of a Persian work Dāstān-i-āmir hāmjā.[1]

The mythological stories by Muslim poets are in most cases associated with historical names though the stories themselves are by no means historical. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Muslims had contact with Persian, Arabic and Turkish literature where the stories of the exploits of the great historical figures of their faith were recorded. Moreoever under the influence of mythological works of the Hindus to which they were attracted, and which formed the cultural inheritance of many of their converts, Muslim poets attempted to create new forms of art, narrative poems in which their historical heroes performed exploits similar to those of the mythological characters in the Mangal Kābya. Some of their great leaders took part in warlike exploits which were undoubtedly based on incidents in the Rāmāyaṇ and Mahābhārat and the Mangal Kābya. In the mythological stories of Muslim poets we find some characters are great warriors like Rām of the Rāmāyaṇ, or Bhīm and Arjun of the Mahābhārat. They destroy their opponents ruthlessly as Rām destroyed Rāvan or the Pāṇḍavas destroyed Kauravas. The main object of Rām and Pāṇḍavas was to suppress

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.217

the evil doers and to establish the reign of the true followers of god. The gods themselves appeared in the field of action and destroyed the wrong doers. Rām was himself god and the Pāṇḍavas were the faithful followers of the god Kṛṣṇa who helped them actively to ~~win over~~ defeat their opponents who were considered evil, because they did not follow the doctrines of Kṛṣṇa. In the Hindu Mahākābyas the intention of conversion is absent. The opponents of Rām or Kṛṣṇa or the Pāṇḍavas were not converted after their defeat, rather they were described as demons and sinners and were totally destroyed. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the religion of the Rāmāyan and Mahābhārat is Sanātan or the perennial Hindu religion where there was no scope for conversion.

In the local cults like those of Manasā or Sitalā Maṅgal Kābyas, the followers of deities were also favoured by their respe ctive deities to subjugate the non-believers. These deities were eager to establish their worship and they selected some agents who fought with the help of deities and converted unbelievers to their faith. In Manasā bijay of Bipradās Piplāi of the 15th century we find that the deity Manasā even subjugated two Muslim Princes, Hāsān and Hosen, and compelled them to worship her.

In the legends of Muslim poets we find the combination of both the types of Hindu religious poems - Mahākābya and Maṅgal

Kābya. In their poems the heroes ~~are~~ were painted like the vigorous warriors of the Rāmāẏaṇ and Mahābhārat and were helped directly or indirectly either by Allah or by his prophet to establish his religion. The heroes ~~are~~ were as jealous preachers as the heroes of Maṅgal Kābya. They ~~are~~ were eager to convert the people who ~~do~~ did not follow their faith. In the poems of Muslim poets it is however, not clear whether their rivals were Hindus or their place of action was India. The poets always mentioned the opponents of Muslim heroes as infidels or non-believers and their place of residence or kingdom was named after their imagination which is often beyond the knowledge of geography.

Historical poems.

The next sub-category of narrative poem comprises works which have some claims to be historical, that is to say they contain elements which can be shown to be historically true. The poets drew their materials from different sources, principally from India, the Islamic world as a whole and from Greece.

Some of the Indian material drawn upon seems to have been taken from local memories and family chronicles. Noẏājis Khān, a poet of the 17th century whose descendants are still said to be living in the district of Chittagong[1] composed a work entitled Pāṭhānpraśaṃsā. This poem as the title suggests

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1. Hussain, S.S. (Edited) op.cit., p.91

attempts to detail the history of a certain Pathan who settled in the Chittagong district of Bengal where his descendants are still living, and whose family name is Ādhu Khā.[1] The same poet wrote another work of the same type named Joroẏar Siṃha Kīrti. It set forth the history of a family of a certain Joroẏār Siṃha who lived in Dohājāri in the district of Chittagong. His family now known as Hājārī bamṡa is said to be still represented in Chittagong.[2] Though these works could not with complete accuracy be described as bamṡābalī they do bear some resemblance to that type of literature.

Saiyad Sultān of the 16th century of whom mention has been made before[3] introduced a new subject into Bengali literature in a work entitled Ofāt i Rasul. This poem which is a small work of only 25 folios is a historial work. It records the last days in the life of prophet Mahammad and incidents connected with his death together with a short account of three Caliphs who ruled after the death of the prophet. The title suggests that this work may have derived from an Arabic or Persia source of the same name. But as far as is known no such work has yet been discovered. Sultān's poem is important in the history of Bengali literature because it was the first poem in Bengali on the theme of the death of the prophet, a subject which

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.213
2. Haq, M.E. Ibid., p.214
3. see p. 46

was developed by later poets in that branch of literature known as Maulud śarīf. In the early decades of the 18th century Muhammad Ujir Āli composed a bulky work named Nasle Osmān Islāmābād which has Sāhnāmā as its sub-title. This work has not yet been published but a study of the manuscript has been made by scholars who discount any claim the poem may have to be truly historical. One of the scholars, S.S.Hussain describes it as a "strange amalgamation of truths, half-truths and falsehoods".[1] The principal theme of the poem is an account of the descendants of Hajrat Osmān, the third Caliph of Islam. The poet alleges that Osmān's descendants came ultimately to settle in Chittagong, and that he himself was a member of that family. Such a claim has no sanction in history. His use of the term Sāhnāmā as the sub-title is interesting. It would seem to suggest that the poet felt that his own history, that is the settling of the Osmān family in Chittagong was a work of importance comparable to that of the famous poem of the same name by the Persian poet Firdausi. Ujir Āli started his work in 1714 and completed it in 1720.[2]

The history of the conquest of Alexander the Great and the stories about his wisdom were popular in Persian literature. Nijāmī Ganjā composed a poem named Iskandar nāmā in Persian in 1191.[3] Another celebrated work on this subject in Persian

1. Hussain, S.S. op.cit., p.260
2. Hussain, S.S. Ibid., p.262
3. Browne, E.G. A Literary History of Persia, Vol.II, Cambridge University, 1928, p.401

literature is Khirad-Nāmā-i-SinKāndar (the book of the wisdom of Alexander) by Mullā Nuruddīn Abdur Rahmān Jāmī (1414-1492).[1] The former of these two works was translated into Bengali by the famous poet Ālāol. His poem Dārā Sekāndar nāmā is a fairly literal translation of the Persian original. Compared to the poet's other works it has less poetic quality and is of a descriptive type.[2] But it is important in Bengali literature as being the first work to introduce this subject. The stories of Alexander were popular in the courts of Arakan and Bengal. Ālāol composed Dārā Sekandar Nāmā at the request of Majlish Nabarāj, who was a prince of Arakan.[3] In the middle of the 19th century the ~~King~~ Rājā of Burdwan also commissioned the translation of Iskandarnāmā into Bengali.[4]

Ballads.

The term ballad as the descriptive title of a particular branch of narrative literature in Bengali was first applied by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen who collected a number of narrative poems from East Bengal, now East Pakistan. These poems he edited in both Bengali and English between the years

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1. Browne, E.G. op.cit.,Vol.III, p.516
2. Sen, S. Bāngala Sahityer Itihās, Vol.I (2nd edition) Calcutta 1948, p.592
3. Sen, S. Ibid., p.590
4. Sen,S. Ibid., p.942

1922 to 1932.[1] The term under which they were published in Bengali is gītikā. According to Sen stories in verse which he names ballads were composed by both Hindu and Muslim poets. They seem however, to have been lost from the Hindu tradition and preserved only in the Muslim tradition of Bengali literature. Sen comments as follows: "As the purists of Brahminic renaissance gradually imposed more and more stringent rules in regard to social morals, some of the finest of ballads breathing a refreshing air of freedom were condemned as unholy, and Mahua, Kamala, Kajal Rekha, Bhelua and many other ballads of great poetic beauty and charm bore the ban of Brahminic canons and were expelled from Hindu homes. We owe their existence to Mohammedan "Gayans" who did not set a pin's fee at the angry look of the Brahmins".[2]

The ballads which were current in the area from which Sen obtained them contain many beautiful stories in verse. These stories are local and describe the joys and sorrows of ordinary people. The poets whose names are preserved in the bhanitās of the various poems themselves belonged to the area where their works have been preserved and the language in which they wrote was their own mother tongue and its use imparts to the poem

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1. In English Dr.C.C.Sen edited four volumes each having two parts, ~~of~~ Eastern Bengal Ballads, ~~and was~~ published by the University of Calcutta between 1923 and 1932. In Bengali he edited four volumes ~~of~~ Purba banga gītikā and two volumes of Maimansingha gītikā and was published by the University of Calcutta between 1922 and 1932.
2. Sen, D.C. Eastern Bengal Ballads. Vol.IV, part 1. University of Calcutta, 1932. p.XXVII

simplicity which is their chief charm. Nothing is known of the origin of the age of these ballads. Sen recorded them from lips of local bards. It has been suggested however, that they cover "a period of about 300 years from the 16th century onwards".[1]

The heroes and heroines of the stories include both Hindus and Muslims and the social background they describe is clearly one which rests upon a mixed culture. Many of these stories are not known from any other source; neither is it known whether the bards of East Pakistan have in their repertory other poems of a similar quality which Sen was unable to record. They represent an important element in Bengali literature but being of local provenance and interest they stand apart from the main themes of Bengali literature. It is important however, to make mention of them in this thesis which is concerned principally with literature in mixed diction, because they do not reflect in their vocabulary, grammar or syntax, any influence of the mixed diction which passed later under the title Dobhāṣī.

Lyrics.

No survey of the contribution of Muslim poets to medieval Bengali literature would be complete without a

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1. Sen, D.C. op.cit., Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1923, 'forward' by Ronaldshay.

mention of lyric poetry. But as lyric poetry contributes little to the subject of this thesis the mention of it here is brief. Lyric poetry by Muslim poets embraces Vaiṣṇava songs, Sufi mystic songs, song on yoga and Bāul songs.

It is important to notice that the Muslim poets entered so closely into the literary fashion of their day that many of them wrote songs on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme and they wrote them in both Bengali and Brajabuli. Sukumar Sen in his work, A History of Brajabuli Literature, mentions the names of a number of Muslim poets.[1] A fuller list is included in a work by M.A. Hai and A..Sharif, Madyayuger Bāṅglā Kabita, published by the Univeristy of Dacca in 1961.[2] The Muslim contribution to the history of this theme goes back to the 16th century with such poets as Saikh Kabir, Murtajā and Saiyad Sultān, and, possibly, according to M.E. Haq, to Chānd Kāji in the 15th century.[3]

The earliest lyrics on Sufi themes appear to have been written by a poet named Mujammil. His work Sāyat Nāmā is

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1. Sen, S. A History of Brajabuli Literature, Calcutta University, 1935, Chapter XXI
2. In the following works collection of Baiṣnava songs composed by Muslim poets may be found: (a) Mallik, R.M. - Musalman Baiṣnava Kabi (b) Sanyal, B.S. - Musalmān Baiṣnava Kabi, in 4 vols. Rajshahi, 1904-6 (c) Hai, M.A. (Edited) Sahitya Patrikā, Vol.IV, No.I, Dacca, 1961. In this Patrika Mr.A. Sharif has edited 402 songs composed by 82 Muslim poets.
3. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.70

believed by M.E.Haq to have been composed in the middle of the 15th century.[1] It is apparently based upon an Arabic work named Ilmus sāẏāt. The evidence for this is to be found in one of Mujammil's poems which contains the following couplet: "Everybody cannot understand Arabic so I have written in Bengali paẏar so that all can understand".[2] Saiyad Sultān also composed a number of Sufi songs collected under two titles, Jñān cautisā and JÑānpradīn and there is a well known collection named Tālibnāmā which is credited to a 17th century poet named Śaikh Cānd.

The only yoga poet of note seems to be of Saiẏad Murtajā whose work Yoga Kalandar is a lyric expression of yoga practice.

Muslim contributions to Bāul literature are considerable. The best known of the Bāul poets is Lālan Śāh, a Muslim who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries. The poet Tagore "had a high regard for him" and some of his songs "gave him great inspiration".[3] Lālan's songs have been collected and published by the University of Calcutta.[4] The big Bāul centre founded

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1. Haq, M.E., op.cit., p.69
2. Text: "Arbi bhaṣaẏ sabe nā bujhe Kāraṇ/ sabhāne bujhite Kailu paẏār racaṇ//"
3. Sen, Sī Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol.I, 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1948, pp.992-93
4. Das, M and Mahapatra, P.K. (edited), Lālan gītikā, Calcutta University, 1958. (462 songs have been collected in this work.)

by Lālan Śāh is in Kustia, only a few miles from Silāidaha where Tagore spent an important part of his life.

Instructive or Didactic poems.

The religion of the faithful Muslim is guided by many rules, some of which derived from the Koran itself, others from later authorities. These rules which are systematically codified contain not only doctrinal teaching but also guidance for day-to-day living. They are obligatory on every orthodox believer.

Islam being a missionary religion spread over many countries where it came into contact with different social systems and different cultures. In Bengal many Hindus and Buddhists were converted to Islam and as could be expected in such circumstances they imported some of their own customs and certain aspects of their own religion into the new faith. Orthodox teachers of Islam regarded these accretions as wrong and did their utmost to eradicate them. The Instructive poems embody the codified rules of Islam and were used in an attempt to purify the Islamic faith of extraneous pollution. This accounts for the very large number of so-called instructive poems which were written, and it accounts also for their great and continuing currency. This category of writing must

therefore be treated as a separate stream in Bengali literature. It may be divided, according to subject matter, into two sections: (a) Poems based on the Islamic code of law; (b) Poems based on non-Islamic and secular subjects.

The instruction contained in the first of the two sections embraces religion and the behaviour of men and women both as individuals and as members of society. The following subjects are commonly treated in the rules set forth: The birth of a child, the rules for providing it with a name, the method of education, marriage and divorce, daily prayers, the rules for washing different parts of the body, the manner in which prayer should be offered, rules governing fasting etc., The rule book also teaches the benefit which accrues from readir the Koran and the dangers which follow from neglect of prayer. They range from statements on the futility of riches to advice against keeping dogs as pets. They lay down the whole range of moral and social duties together with the punishments to be awarded when any of them are violated. Extensive and socially important as these poems are undoubtedly considered to be, they have however, little poetic quality and literary merit.

A number of instructive poems have been issued under the title Nasihat nāmā which can be translated instructive poem. The earliest extant work in this branch of literature is

that of Āfjāl Āli of the early 16th century.[1] A verse compilation of rules under the same title was issued by Sekh Parāṇ in the 16th century. The poet himself states that his work is adapted from Persian: "This story was written in the Persian language. So ~~then~~ I have written it in the Bengali language so that it could be understood".[2]

Parāṇ's son Sekh Muttālib composed a large work within this branch of literature under the title Kifāẏātul Musāllīn. It is dated 1551-52. The popularity of this particular work may be gauged from the large number of manuscripts which are now extant, many of them in the Dacca Univeristy library.[3] Ālāol contributed a work named Tohfā to this branch of literature in 1664. Ālāol states that his work is a translation from a Persian work of the same name which was composed by Iusuf Gadā in 1392.[4] A very long list of later poets could be drawn up but it is sufficient for our purpose to mention Ābdul Hākim and Hāẏāt Mamud who wrote in the 17th and 18th centuries respectively.

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., pp.73-4
2. Text: fārsi bhasē sei kathā āchila likhan/ bāṅgla bhāṣāy Kailuṃ bujhite kāraṇ//"
3. Hussain, S.S. op.cit., pp.49-60,62, 65, 193
4. Haq, M.E. Ibid., p.247

Instructive poems on non-Islamic subjects cover a very wide range. The earliest known work is Nīti śāstra bārtā written by Mujammil in the 15th century: It covers subjects as diverse as earthquakes, lunar and solar eclipses, dreams, burning of houses, omens and auspicious signs and also the rules of yoga and the marks of a yoginī. Later works developing the subjects of yoga have been discovered, notably Sekh Cānd's Haragaurī saṅgbād in the 17th century. In form this poem is a discourse delivered by the god Śiva to his spouse Gaurī. Translations from the Sanskrit Hitapadeś have also been found. The earliest, that of Hafiz Mamud in 1732-33, was according to S.Sen translated not from Sanskrit direct but from a Persian version of the Sanskrit poem.[1] Satyakali bibād saṅgbād by Muhammad Khān is a symbolic poem with a moral purpose. Satya and Kali symbolise right and wrong. The theme of the poem which was composed in 1635 is the struggle between these two forces resulting in the victory of the former and the defeat of the latter.

It is interesting to note that from the 16th century several poems were composed on Rāgas and Tālas. These works are little more than music manuals. They explain the different notes and comments on tunes and some of them quote from Sanskrit works on musicology. Perhaps the most important of

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.860

these manuals are Rāgnāmā by Sekh Faijulla and Rāgmāla of Fajil Nāsir Muhammad which are assigned respectively to the 16th and 18th centuries.

Elegiac Poems.

The final stream of literature which requires mention at this stage is that which passed under the popular title of Marsiẏā Sāhitya, a term which may be translated elegiac. Compositions of this type are almost exclusively confined to Muslim poets.[1] The principal theme of elegian literature is of foreign origin. It is based on a historical event, namely the battle of Kārbālā which was fought in 683 A.D. between Imām Hosen and the army of Ejid, the second Caliph of the Umaiẏad dynasty.

The first elegian poem known to us is Jaẏnāler Cautiś a which was written by Sekh Faijullāh in the 16th century. It is a short poem and as the title implies records the lamentation of Jainal, the son of Imam Hosen who was killed in the battle of Karbala. The poem was named after a style of writing called Cautisā which is derived from the word cautriś which means thirty four. It is a type of Bengali poetry which is

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1. So far only one Hindu poet is available who wrote poems on Marisiẏā Sahitya in the latter part of the 18th century. The poem called Imamaẏner Kecchā by Rādhā Charan Gop. (See - Islāmi Bangla Sahitya by S.Sen, p.49)

structurally based on the 34 letters in the Bengali alphabet. It consists of 34 stanzas each stanza commencing with a Bengali letter in order as they are arranged in the alphabet. Another elegiac was written in the 16th century. It is the work of Daulat Ujir Bahrām Khān who has been mentioned above as the author of Lāilā Majnu. The title of his poem is Kārbāla Kāhinī. Muhammad Khān wrote a very lengthy elegiac poem Maktul Hosen in 1645-46.[1] It has been suggested that Khān planned his work on the model of Sanskrit epic Mahābhārat. He divided it into cantos and the title of two of his cantos namely ādi and strī are also to be found in the Mahābhārat. Jaṅganāmā or Maharram-parba of Hāẏāt Māmud is dated 1723.

Form and Style.

The above summary makes it clear that there was a marked difference in the themes adopted by Hindu writers on the one hand and Muslim writers on the other. The form and language of the works of Muslim writers were not however appreciably different from those of their Hindu contemporaries. The Muslim poets unquestionably were influenced by the style and form of literature established in the Medieval period by the Hindu poets.

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1. Sen, S. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol.I Second edition, Calcutta, 1948, p.598

Many of the poems bear descriptive titles which are clearly taken over from Hindu poetry. The use of the work Bijaý and Pāñcālī which are common among Hindu writers of Mahākābya and Maṅgal Kābya are found frequently in the titles of Muslim works.[1] At the same time they introduced a large number of titles from Persian. Others were based on the name of the hero and herione, or on the name of the theme. Thus the title Kecchā[2] and Nāmā[3] like Sikāndarnāmā or Nasihat nāmā are after the Persian style. ~~The~~ Titles like Lailā Majnu contains the name of the hero and herione and a title like Hapta paýkar is based on the name of the theme.

There is evidence of the influence of Sanskrit literature in the works of Muslim poets. Perhaps the most striking of these is the inclusion in longer narrative poems of a type of composition known as bāramāsī. This type of poem usually described the sorrows of a lover from month to month throughout the twelve months of the year. The origin of the style is definitely Sanskrit where in S.Sen's words it "describe the joys or sorrows of a lady in company or in separation from

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1. Obviously Muslim poets named their poems Rasulbijaý after the name of Hindu poems Pāndabbijaý or Śrīkriṣnabijaý; Nabibangśa after the Hindu poem Haribangśa; Padmabatīpañcali after the name of Hindu poems Bharat pañcali or Śrirampañcalī.
2. The work keccha is a corrupted form of the Persian word qiṣṣa which means 'a thing,affair,business,history,tale, fable, narration'etc., (Acomprehensive Persian-English Dictionary by F.Steingass,Second impression, London, 1930, S.V.P.924)
3. The word Nāmā is a corrupted form of the Persian word Nāmāh, ( )which means 'writing, letter,epistle,a history..... model, type'etc., (F.Steingass,Ibid., S.VP.1380)

her lover during the twelve months of the year and are in reality continuation of the tradition established by Kalidas's Ṛtu-samhār".[1] In Hindu poetry the baramāsī is usually restricted to the lamentations of women. Muslim poets extended its scope to include the joys and sorrows of both men and women.

Both Hindu and Muslim poets employ the same metres in their narrative poetry, namely paẏār and tripadī. The paẏār metre consists of rhymed couplets, each line of which consists of fourteen syllables. The caesura normally falls at the end of the 8th syllable though positional variation is common. The two sections of the paẏār line are felt by Bengali critics to be ~~quantitively~~ quantitatively equal. The tripadī metre is a variation of paẏār. It too consists of rhyming couplets but each line is divided into three sections with a caesura after each. The first two sections in each line are linked by end rhyme. The greater part of narrative poetry was written in paẏār metre, tripadī being introduced as an occasional variation. One further feature of this type of literature is that each line is a complete unit and there is no run on from line to line or from couplet to couplet. An examination of metre alone would be insufficient to determine whether the poet was a Hindu or a Muslim.

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1. Sen, S. History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.18

CHAPTER III

The first occurrences of mixed diction in Middle Bengali Works.

It is clear from the previous chapter that the influence of Arabic and specially of Persian literature on the writers mentioned was considerable. Many of the works of Muslim writers during the medieval period were either translations or adaptations from Arabic or Persian works. In view of the use made of Perso-Arabic sources it might be expected that the language used would reveal indebtedness to the languages of the originals. This in fact is not the case. The language employed by Muslim writers in the medieval Bengali period is the traditional literary language of Bengal. The language of Muslim poets in respect of both grammar and vocabulary cannot be distinguished from those of contemporary Hindu poets. To express this fact in another way it is impossible from a study of language alone to determine whether a writer was a Hindu or a Muslim. To such an extent did Muslim poets carry their adoption of the vocabulary and language forms which were current in Bengal in the medieval period, that a number of poems by Muslim poets written in the Brajabuli language are still extant. This latter fact is the more surprising in view of the association of Brajabuli with the Vaiṣṇava cult in Hinduism.

The influence of the spoken and literary language of the Muslim invaders of Bengal did however make itself felt during the medieval period. Though no work written by a Muslim poet reveals the influence of the invaders' language, the works of Hindu poets unquestionably do and that from a comparatively early period. Though the dates of medieval works cannot always be fixed with accuracy, and although existing manuscripts are frequently two to three hundred years later than the date of original composition, there is reason to believe that the influence of the new Muslim language was beginning to be reflected in Bengali literature not later than the end of the fifteenth century.

As far as is known at present, the first work which has preserved evidence of the influence of the language of Muslim invaders is the Manasābijay of Bipradās Piplāi which is generally accepted as belonging to the end of the 15th century. S.Sen gives the date 1495/96.[1] Bipradās was a Hindu poet and a member of the Brahmin caste. He belonged to the district of 24 parganas in West Bengal.[2] The great part of his long work is composed in the standard Bengali of the period, but in pālās four and five which contain descriptions of the court of a Muslim prince, Hasan, we

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1. Sen,S. (Edited) Vipradāsa's Manasā-vijaya, Calcutta, 1953, Introduction, p.IV.
2. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal - Proceedings, 1892, pp.193-97.

find for the first time, a mixed diction consisting of Bengali and Perso-Arabic elements. The following short example is sufficient to illustrate the type of language used:

Kāji majlis kari Ketāb Korān dhari
Khātāgulā tajbij kare /
soār peẏādā kata Majudāt śata śata
sadā pāe hātiẏār dhare //
keha bā julum kare Keha guṇā sire dhare
ruju kari karaẏe nechāb /
jatek chaiẏad mollā jabaẏeta bismillā
sadā mukhe kalimā Ketāb // A

This passage contains a total of 40 words, 20 of which are Perso-Arabic. All 20 are loan words and are nouns. There is one hybrid word, Khātāgulā. It consists of two components: khātā and gulā. Khātā is a Persian word meaning 'crime' and gulā is a Bengali plural suffix. Another Persian word śir, meaning 'head' is inflected with the Bengali locative case inflection, e.

A. Translation = The Kāji declares the court in session, takes up the Koran and sacred books and begins to pass sentences. Hosts of soldiers, both cavalry and foot, and hundreds of attendants, all well-armed stand by constantly. Some of the criminals had committed crimes of violence, others moral offences. He caused them to bow and passed sentence. Throughout the proceeding all the Saiẏads and Mollās repeated the name of Allāh and recited from His scriptures.

Kabikankan Mukundarām, the famous poet from Burdwan, West Bengal, composed his Caṇḍīmaṅgal in 1589.[1] The poet was a Brahmin.[2] The passage quoted below is taken from a descriptive passage in which the poet is writing of the Muslim inhabitants in the kingdom of Kālketu, the hero of the poem's first section.

āila caṛiā tāji saiẏad maulānā kāji
khaẏrāte bīr deẏ bāri /
puber paścim pāṭi bolaẏe hāsanhāti
baise kaliṅga deś Chāṛi //
fajar samaẏe Uṭhi bichāẏe lohit pāti
pā̃e beri karaẏe nāmāj /
solemāni mālā kare jape pīr pegambare
pīrer mokāme deẏ sā̃j //
daś biś berādare basiẏā bicār kare
anudin Ketāb Korān

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1. Sen, S. History of Bengali literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.126.
2. Sen,S. Ibid, p.123.

kehabā basiẏā hāte pīrer sīrin bāṭe
sāje bāje dagaṛ biśān //
baṛai dāniśbanda nājāne Kapat Chanda
prān gele rojā nāhi chāṛe /

B

This passage contains a total of 68 words, 20 of which are Perso-Arabic loan words. All 20 are nouns with the exception of danisbanda, which is an adjective. There is one proper noun which is a hybrid, hāsanhāṭi; hāsan being an Arabic proper noun and hāṭi being the Bengali word for market place. A number of loan words bear Bengali case inflections, e.g. khairāte, pīrer etc.

The above two poets belong to the 15th-16th centuries and the examples quoted illustrate the nature of a mixed diction which consists of Perso-Arabic and Bengali elements. This mixed diction later came to be known as Dobhāṣī, a term which will be employed hereafter. The condition of Dobhāṣī as found in the works of Bipradās and Mukundarām marks the stage to which it has advanced by the end of the 16th century. The Perso-Arabic element is restricted to nouns including one adjective in the Mukundaram's passage. Verbs, pronouns

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B. Translation = Saiẏads, Maulānās and Kājis arrive on horse back and are presented with houses by the prince (hero) who names the eastern and western sections of the city, Hāsanhāṭi. They settle there in preference to the Kingdom of Kaliṅga. They arise early each morning, spread the red mats and pray five times. They take 'solemānī' rosary in their hands and repeat the names of saints and prophets, and they light candles at the tomb of the saint. Ten or twenty Muslims sit together all day

contd. overleaf....

and other vocabulary elements are those of standard Bengali. It will be noted also that the passages relate to social contacts in which Muslim characters play a prominent part. Dobhāṣī was not used in contexts which were exclusively Hindu.

In 1663, a poem called Satyapīrer pā̃cālī was composed by Dvija Gīridhar of the district of Burdwan, West Bengal. He uses mixed diction in his dialogues between Satyapīr, a Muslim[1] saint, and his disciple:-

prabandha kariyā pīr dvije kay bāṭ /
tẽi baṛā dātā kuch karata khayrāt //
tin rojkā bhukhā mei khelāo kus mujhe /
hām bahut doyā karinge śuna dātā tujhe //
duniyākā bie me koi dātā hyāy nāi /
ihā khātir hogā terā sunaha gõsāi //

C

B. Translation continued from previous page:
long, discussing the scriptures and Koran. Some sit in the market place and hand out sweetmeats from the shrine. At evening they play the pipes and drum. They are very wise and innocent of all deceit and will not break their fasts even on threat of death.

C. Translation: The saint accosts the brahmin saying courteously "You are very generous, please give me alms. I have eaten nothing for three days, give me something to eat, I shall bless you, listen to me, generous man. You will be respected as the most generous man in the world, listen to me, respected sir."

1. Sāhitya pariṣat patrikā, part IV, Calcutta, 1320 B.S. (1913 A.D.).

Out of a total of 38 words in this passage 23 are of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. Nouns include Perso-Arabic loans as well as Hindustani loans e.g. duniyā (Perso-Arabic), and bāṭ (Hindustani). An innovation in Dobhāṣī can be found in this passage; verbal and pronominal of Hindustani origin are used side by side with verbs and pronouns of Bengali origin. These Hindustani verbs and pronouns are used deliberately instead of their Bengali counterpart which were available for the author's use had he so desired. For example, e.g. Karaṅge, hogā, Hindustani verbs are used instead of kariba, habe, their Bengali equivalents; and the Hindustani pronouns, mei, mujhe, tujhe are preferred to the Bengali forms āmi, amāke, toke.

Kṛṣṇarām Dās, an inhabitant of Calcutta, wrote a poem called Rāy Maṅgal in the year 1686.[1] This poem is sprinkled with verses in mixed diction, especially in dialogues involving a Muslim saint:-

bemān kāfer tom besor Kamjāt /
sunare āhāmak gidhī merī ek bāṭ //
khāoke jāṅguli huyāke mātālā /
etabarā kadurāt deoe gāli gālā //

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1. Bhattacharya, S.N. Kabi Kṛṣṇarāmdāser granthāvalī, Calcutta University, 1958, p.15

abhi nāi jānteho barakhā̃ gāji pīr /
khodāý mādār diýā duniýāku jāhir //

D

Out of a total of 31 words in this quotation 26 are Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words including the Hindustani verbal and pronominal forms, Khāoke (Bengali - Khāiýā), huāke (Bengali - haiýā), tom (Bengali - tumi), merī (Bengali - āmār) etc.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century[1] Rāmesvar Bhattacharya of the district of Midnapur, West Bengal, wrote a poem called Satyapīrer Pā̃cālī. In the speech of a Muslim saint he used mixed diction:

jānā geýā bāt bāoýa jānā geýā bāt /
kāprāta leo bhālā āo merā sāt //
jeota satyapīr merā jeota satyapīr /
terā dukh dūr karo tāo hām fakir //
esā kuch hunar bātāý diũ toý /
kiýā piche sitāb khāýer khub hoý //

D. Translation: You are irreligious infidel and a shameless bastard. Listen to me you stupid vulgar man. You are intoxicated with opium and imagine yourself to be sufficiently important to abuse me. You do not realise yet, the Bara Khā Gāji is a saint. The whole world acknowledges that God has made him so.

1. Bāṅglā Ekādemī Patrikā, Vol.I, No.I, Dacca, January, 1957.

satya pīr pā̃o me ekidā karo dil /
saheb karegā terā niẏat hāsil //
āpse cālāẏ deo sirnikā mad /
kohi terā hukum karegā rāhi rad //

E

Out of a total of 60 words in this passage, 50 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. They include nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives. The title of the poem is itself a hybrid combination of three words, satya, a Bengali word, meaning true, pīr a Persian word, meaning saint, and pā̃cālī another Bengali word meaning narrative poem, the whole being inflected by means of the Bengali genitive case suffix -er.

The date of Rāmāi Pandit's Śūnyapurāṇ is uncertain. One of its sections entitled Jālāli Kalimā describes an attack on Orissa by the Muslims. The Muslim King of Bengal, Shamsuddin Ilias Shah, established his authority in Orissa in the middle of the fourteenth century.[1] It is most likely

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E. Translation: I know about you, my son, I know about you. Be a good man, pack your things and come with me. Satyapīr is a living saint, my saint. Satyapīr is a living saint. I am a real ascetic if I can put an end to your sorrows. I shall teach you such things as will soon put you right, provided you use them. Focus your mind on the feet of Satyapīr. He will give you your heart's desire. Institute the custom of śirni (distributing sweetmeats.) No one will dare oppose your order.

1. Sarkar, J.N. (Sir). The History of Bengal, Vol.II, Dacca University, 1948, pp. 103-5.

that part of the poem was composed in the fourteenth century. However the language of the extant text does not strike one as very old. It might have been changed in subsequent ages by the scribes. It contains some mixed diction of the type which was common in the 17th century, a fact which has not yet been taken into account when attempting to fix the date of the extant manuscript.

kãhā jāteho khonkār āṅgrākhā lāgāye gāý
śirme topi terā
hātme churi terā
pāuṣ deke pāý /

hārām ki ur
kāhã hāllāl karegā
eta bābu rāmai gāý //
F

Out of a total of 25 words in this passage, 17 are either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani. These words include nouns, some bearing Hindustani inflections, such as hātme; verbs, both finite and nonfinite, such as jāteho, deke; and adverbs, such as kāhã. It appears that in the 17th century

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F. Translation: Where are you going Khankār all dressed up in your long coat, with a hat on your head, a knife in your hand and shoes on your feet. Where are you going(?) To make the impure into pure one (?) Thus sings babu Ramai.

the scope of the vocabulary of mixed diction had been enlarged by the use of Hindustani verbs, pronouns and nominal inflections.

Ghanaram Cakrabarti of the district of Burdwan, West Bengal, wrote Dharmamaṅgal in 1710.[1] He employs mixed diction in the description of Muslims:

mīr miyā mogal mahale dila dāgā /
bā̃dī bale fatnā bibi fupāy khele bāghā //
ai ti kharāpe pāche āse anthapure /
dekhta bhāyā gāji miā̃ bāghtī kata dūre //
balite balite bāghā dāgā dila giyā /
lejṭā nācāye lamfe nāk sāṭ diyā //
bhaye miyāgaṇa kata huṭāre hutāśe /
bobā hala tobā tobā keha keha trāśe /
hāmām ādam bā khodāy kadam /
hutāśe ekidā hārā haila bedam //

G

G. Translation: Mīr Miyā and Mogal dashed into the house. Bā̃dī said "Fatnābibi, a tiger has eaten uncle. Oh, the wicked creature is coming after me into the inner house. Have a look, brother Gāji Miā, and see how far away the tiger is?" Even as she spoke, the tiger rushed into the room. It swished its tail and sprang about, breathing heavily. In fear and terror they all huddled together; some to their shame lost their voice for sheer panic. Their excessive fear robbed them of their senses and they even forgot to turn to God who gave man birth.

1. Chattopadhyay, G.D. (Edited) Srīdharma maṅgal, Calcutta, 1888. Introduction, p.2.

Out of a total of 60 words in this passage 22 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. They include some nouns, a few bearing Bengali inflections, such as mahale and fupāẏ, one a plural suffix, miẏāgaṇ, an adverb, bedam and a few adjectives.

In his book Bāṅgalā Sāhityer Itihās, S.Sen, refers to Bidyapati, a poet of the early 18th century and author of Satya Nārāẏṇer P̃ācālī which contains frequent use of mixed diction.[1]

haiẏā bāndār bāndā nūaiẏā śir /
bandiba baṛakhā̃ gāji pīr dastagīr //
ekdile bandiba dardasta pīr /
baṛakhā̃ gājire yei karila jāhir //

H

Out of a total of 19 words in this quotation 13 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. There are nouns, some of which bear Bengali inflections, such as dile, gājire; one adverb: jāhir.

H. Translation: I, the slave of a slave, bow my head and salute Baṛa Khā̃ Gāji who is a great saint. With sincerity I salute the saint Dardāstā who revealed Baṛakhā̃ Gāji.

1. Karim, Munshi Abdul (Edited) Satya Nārāẏaner pũthi, Bāṅgiẏa Sahitya Parisat Calcutta, 1915, Introduction, p.2.

1. Sen, S. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol. I, 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 809-10

Srīkabi Ballabh of the 24 parganas of West Bengal wrote Satya Nārāyaner pūthi in 1715.[1*] He uses mixed diction in the dialogues involving Satya Nārāyaṇ, who is usually a Hindu deity but is here endowed with certain Muslim characteristics:

Sunaha bemām rājā bāt kāhu tore /
rākhyācha golām merā kiser khātire //
sāt hājārer mārtā liyācha bhāṛāyā /
mahal bhitare nāce sāt sata nādyā //
hān hān kāt kāt kariyā fukure /
rudhirer nadī bahe mahal bhitare //
tāmām sahare āg lāgāiyā dila /
jaru jāti māl mārtā jvalite lāgila //

I

Out of a total of 44 words in this passage 17 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. These include nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs.

I. Translation: Listen, faithless King, to what I have to say to you. On what charge are you detaining my slave(?) You misappropriated seven thousand (rupees) from him. Seven hundred dancing girls dance in your palace. Slay! Slay! Kill! Kill! He shouts and a river of blood flows through the palace. He sets fire to the whole city. Women, property and wealth are caught in the flames.

1* Karim, Munshi Abdul (Edited) Satya Nārāyaner pūthi, Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, Calcutta, 1915, Introduction, p.2.

Bhārat Candra Rāý, an important poet of the late Middle Bengali period, who lived in the pargana Bhurśut in West Bengal, wrote his most important work Annadā maṅgal in 1752.[1] In this poem he makes frequent use of mixed diction:

māṇsiṃha yoṛhāte añjalī bandiýā māthe
kahe jāhāpanā selāmat /
rāmjir kudrate mahim haila fate
kebal tomāri kerāmat //
hukum śāhānśāhi ārkichu nāhi cāhi
jer haila nimakhārām /
golām golāmī kaila gālim kaýed haila
bahādurī sāheber nām //

J

Out of a total of 34 words in this passage 17 are of either Perso-Arabic or Hindustani origin. These include nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Some of them bear Bengali inflections, such as kudrate, saheber.

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1. Bandopadhyay, B.N. and Das, S.K. (Edited) Bhārat Candra Granthāvalī (Second edition) Bangiýa Sāhitya Parisat, Calcutta, 1950.

J. Translation: Māṇsiṃha joining his hand together and raising them above his head said, "Salute, O emperor! By the grace of Rām, the battle has ended in victory, yours alone is the glory. I desire nothing but your majesty's orders. The disloyal enemy has been destroyed. Your servants have done their duty, your enemy is imprisoned. Great is the name of the sāheb.

In his poem Annadā Maṅgal, Bhārat Candra makes an important reference to the mixed diction which in this chapter has been designated Dobhāṣī. The passage concerned is quoted in full:

mānsiṃha pādsār haila ye bānī /
ucit ye fārsi ārbi hindustānī //
pariāchi ye mata barnibāre pāri /
kintu se sakal loke bujhibāre bhāri //
nā rabe prasād guṇ nā habe rasāl /
ata eb kahi bhāṣā yābani misāl //
prācīn paṇḍitgaṇ giyāchen kaye /
ye hok se hok bhāṣā kābya ras laye //

Translation: The appropriate languages for a conversation between Mansiṃha and the emperor (of Delhi) are Persian, Arabic and Hindustānī. Since I studied these languages, I could use them, but they are difficult for people to understand. They lack grace and poetic quality. I have chosen, therefore, the mixed language of the Muslims. The ancient sages declare 'any language may be used. The important thing is poetic quality'.

There is much information in this short passage. It may be analysed as follows. The court languages in vogue at the time were Persian and Arabic, the language of Islamic religion and culture and 'Hindustānī',[1] had gained considerable

1. It is possible that by Hindustānī Bharat Candra means the language we now know as Urdu. This language was designated "Moors" by N.B.Halhed who wrote some 20yrs after the death of Bharat Candra. See Halhed, N.B. A Grammar of the Bengal Language, Hoogly, Bengal, 1778, Preface, p.XIII.

currency at the colloquial level as a popular town language. Bharat Candra was proficient in all these three languages. His claim to proficiency can be substantiated from other sources. He deliberately avoided the use of any of the three languages mentioned though it would seem that they would have been appropriate in the context of his poem, because 'they are difficult for people to understand'. He therefore used a language which he describes as 'bhāṣā jābani misāl'. The implication of his statement is that this language was easy for people to understand, and by people in this respect it is reasonable to presume that he meant both Hindu and Muslim. Bhārat Candra himself was a Hindu. His poem Annadāmaṅgal deals with a subject well known in the context of Hindu culture. It is unlikely therefore that he would have used a language even to the limited extent to which in fact he used the mixed diction, if his Hindu readers could not have understood it. This subject is treated at greater length in a later chapter. But it is necessary at this stage to draw a limited conclusion.

The situation so far may therefore be summarised as follows. Mixed diction, or Dobhāṣī, is found first in the works of Hindu poets, many of them Brahmins and all of them belonging to the Western part of Bengal. It seems to

have been developed in its literary aspects by them only. Contemporary Muslim poets though writing on themes which belong to the culture of Islam and which are consequently quite different from the themes developed by Hindu poets, made no use of Dobhāṣī. Their works are written in the standard Bengali of the period except for a few excursions into Brajabuli. Bhārat Candra's statement has a further importance in its implication that Dobhāṣī had sufficient affinity to the language of current speech in his circle for his listeners - it needs to be understood that his poem would be listened to more frequently than read from - to understand his narrative. When therefore the Muslim poets began to write in Dobhāṣī in the 18th century they were employing a form of language which had been established as a literary diction by Hindu poets over a period of some three hundred years, and which had also in the century in which they began to adopt it sufficiently strong affinities with the spoken language for at least a section of the people to understand it.

It is not irrelevant to note that Bhārat Candra's second reason for adopting Dobhāṣī was its literary potentiality. Dobhāṣī was to him a language which had 'poetic quality'.

The following chart contains a statistical analysis of the nature of Dobhāṣī from its earliest period as illustrated in the passages quoted above.

Statistical analysis of the words in the passages A to J

Date	Passage	Total no. of words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani	Word Analysis			
				Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adjective Adverb etc.
Before 1600	A	40	20	20			
	B	68	20	19			1
1600-1700	C	38	23	11	6	2	4
	D	31	26	9	2	3	12
	E	60	50	15	8	9	18
	F	25	17	9	2	3	3
After 1700	G	60	22	15			7
	H	19	13	10			3
	I	44	17	12	2	1	2
	J	34	17	8			9

The chart makes it clear that before 1600 the vocabulary of Dobhāṣī consisted, with the exception of a single adjective, of nouns. After 1600 words other than nouns begin to be reppesented. These include pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs etc. for which, as has been stated above, Bengali equivalents were available. The widest scatter of vocabulary element is to be found in E where out of a total of 50 Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words 35 are pronouns, verbs, adjectives etc. The process of utilising non-nominal elements does not however continue to increase after 1700. Three of the examples quoted contain no instances of pronouns or verbs, the other comparatively few. The reason for this apparent reversal of the trend of development is not easy to find. It may however be hazarded that it was not unaffected by political changes, changes in the relative status of the languages current in Bengal and the fact that in the 18th century Muslim poets themselves had begun to adopt Dobhāṣī as their own peculiar language and that therefore as a literary diction it was slowly being accepted as the preserve of Muslim writers.

CHAPTER IV

The Adoption of Dobhāṣī by Muslim poets.

It has been noted in the previous chapter that Dobhāṣī diction was first applied to literary composition by Hindu poets and that before 1700 there was no evidence of its use by Muslim poets. In the 18th century however, Muslim poets adopted Dobhāṣī diction as the language of large number of poetical works and the practice continued through the 19th century. It would not be true however, to ~~imply~~ infer that Dobhāṣī diction was from this time employed by all Muslim poets in all their writings. Many of them continued to write in the standard Bengali of the age and still do.

The first poet to use Dobhāṣī diction in his poetical writing was Fakir Garibullāh. He has to his credit five completed works and one incomplete, the latter being completed by another poet after Garibullāh's death. Because Garibullāh was the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣī it is necessary to fix as far as evidence permits, the main dates of his life and work.

Some of his works contain autobiographical references from which the following facts emerge: He was the eldest son of Sāh Dundi. His Father was a mendicant, 'āllār fakir'. Perhaps the poet inherited his title 'Fakir' from his father. It is not uncommon among the Muslims of Bengal for such a title to be passed down from generation to generation.

Garibullāh was an inhabitant of Hāfijpur in Baliẏā pargānā in the district of Burdwan[1] in West Bengal. The poet did not mention any date of composition in any of his books, nor did he give the date of any incident in his life. Sukumar Sen has examined this problem variously at different times. His first conclusion was that Garibullāh was still alive some 20 to 25 years before 1792 i.e., between 1767 and 1772.[2] He seems to base this conclusion on the fact that Saiẏad Hāmjā completed Garibullāh's unfinished work in 1794-95, and that therefore Saiẏad Hāmjā who was still a young man at the time could hardly have met Garibullāh earlier than some 20 to 25 years before. The second argument put forward by Sen is to the effect that certain references made to the political authorities in India indicate that British rule at the time of writing had not been firmly established in the country.[3] In another place Sen states that Garibullāh "in all probabily belonged to the early part of the eighteenth century".[4] It is unfortunate that Sen was not able to substantiate his contention that Garibullāh should be assigned to the early part of the eighteenth century.

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1. This part of the district of Burdwan is now in the district of Hugli.
2. Sen,S. Bāngālā Sāhityer Itihās, Vol.I, second edition, Calcutta, 1948, p.919
3. Sen,S. Islāmi Bāngla Sāhitya, Burdwan, 1951, p.107
4. Sen,S. History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960,p157

Muhammad Shahidullah says that one of Garibullāh's works, Iuchaf Jelekhā, was composed sometime after 1765 and that the poet was born in the early part of the 18th century.[1] Muhammad Enamul Haq says that the poet was possibly alive in the first part of the 17th century,[2] a suggestion which conflicts not only with opinions of Sukumar Sen and Muhammad Shahidullah but also with the evidence cited below.

There is a passage in one of Garibullāh's works which helps us to establish his dates within broad limits. In Iuchaf Jelekhā, the poet refers to the political authorities in the country at the time: "May Allah grant peace and prosperity to the Emperor and his ministers. Grant that the faithful remain steadfast in their faith in thee O Allah; preserve them from the torments of hell. Grant that the Rājā, his Deoān, Sikdār, Copdār and Ijārādār continue their rule and reign".[3]

The word bādsā refers to the emperor of Delhi. It is reasonable to assume that the word deoān, which means chief revenue officer, refers to an officer of the King of Burdwan.

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1. Māsik Mohāmmadī, Daçca, Kārtik, 1361 B.S. (1954 A.D.)
2. Haq, M.E. Muslim Bāngla Sāhitya, Dacca, 1957, p.224
3. Text: "Āllātālā chālāmate rākhen bādśāre/
Cher chālāmate rākhe bādśār ujire//
dojakh ājāb haite tvarāo karatār/
imān bajaý rākha mamin sabāre//
Bajāy chalāmat rākha rājār deoāne/
sikdār copdār ijārādār jane//"

The poet himself was an inhabitant of Burdwan and could therefore have been a tenant of the ruler. The deoān is described in the text as rājār deoān or the deoān of rājā. This description seems significant as the title "Mahārāj Adhirāj Bāhādur" was bestowed on the ruler of Burdwan by the Emperor Shāh Ālam a few years after 1753.[1] From that time the ruler of Burdwan was known locally as the 'rājā'. As at the time of writing Garibullāh knew that the ruler's title was rājā, it may with reason be argued that he was alive and actually writing Iuchaf-Jelekhā some time after 1753. The passage quoted in the footnote cannot be assigned to a date earlier than that.

Another important evidence of date is found in another work by Garibullāh, Āmirhāmiā. The poet left this book in complete and it may therefore be regarded as his last work, though complete evidence on this point is lacking. At the end of his composition Garibullāh pays respect to the ruler of the country in the following words: "Garib pays his deepest respects to his sovereign lord Sāhā Nejām and says thus far I write in accordance with the ketāb (book)".[2] Nejām is the

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1. Peterson, J.C.K. - Bengal District Gazetteers - Burdwan, Calcutta, 1910, p.31
2. Text: "garib Kahen sāhā nejāmer pāý/
Ketāb māfik ettā dūre haila sāý//"

Bengali form of Najmud and refers to Najmud Daulā, son of 'Mīr J'afar' who succeeded his father as titular ruler of Bengal in 1765.[1] He reigned for about a year and died in 1766.[2] From this evidence it appears that Garibullāh was alive in 1765-66, and was probably writing Amirhāmjā at that time. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that the couplet quoted is the final couplet in the part of the book written by Garibullāh, the rest of the work being completed by Saiyad Hāmjā who stated that he began composition in 1793 and completed it in 1794.

Recently Golām Sāklāyen says in an article[3] that he has found a date of composition for one of Garibullāh's books, Sonābhāner puthi, in the following words: "Fakir wrote in the afternoon of Monday in the Bengali month of Māgh in the year 1127".[4] The Bengali year 1127 in the month of Māgh corresponds to 1721 A.D. I am dubious about the authenticity of this couplet. I have examined 15 printed copies of Sonābhāner puthi in the British Museum, India Office Library and Cambridge University.libfary.[5] The dates of publication of these copies

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1. Smith, V.A. The Oxford History of India, Oxford, 1923, p.500
2. Hunter, W.W. A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.IX, London, 1876, p.192
3. Bāngla Ekademī Patrikā, Vol.V, No.3., Dacca, 1962
4. " ১১২৭ sāler bāṅglā magh mase/
   sombār bād āchar fakirete bhāṣe//"
3.5. There are two copies of Sonābhānerputhi in the British Museum.
4. Both of them are wrongly catalogued. The first one has been catalogued under the authorship of 'Fakir Al-Din' but in the title page of the book I found 'Adhīn fakir Kartik biracita' i.e. composed by 'Adhīn fakir' which is used as a short name of Fakir Garibullāh in bhanitās of his works. The second copy is also wrongly catalogued under the authorship of /cont'd.

range between 1847 and 1924. All were published in Calcutta except the two latest copies which were published in Dacca in the years 1919 and 1924 respectively. The couplet quoted by Saklāẏen in his article does not occur in any of these copies. The publication which contains the date quoted is stated by him to be dated Dacca, 1941. I have not been able to examine this text. It seems strange however, that Sāklāẏen's text should contain a date whereas none of the other fifteen do. It must also be taken into consideration that none of Garibullāh's other texts contain the dates of composition. This uncorroborated statement cannot be ignored but it would be dangerous to accept it until we can be sure that the words quoted are not an interpolation. It would also be necessary to enquire why Garibullāh whose practice was not to date his works should have done so in this single case, and that the date given should have been preserved in only one edition.

Though the evidence is scarce and difficult to interpret with certainty, it does seem to have been established that Garibullāh lived and wrote in the eighteenth century. If the dates cited above can be accepted the lower limit of his literary career is the early 18th century and the upper limit

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continuation of footnote....
Abd Al-wāsi but in the title page I found the name of 'Srī Abdul Oẏāchen Munsi' recorded as the corrector and publisher of the book. I compared these two copies with other copies of Sonābhāner puthi. I have no doubt that they were composed by Fakir Garibullah though published by different institutions. It is, however, not clear how the authorship of the book was wrongly catalogued.

is 1765 and in view of the possibility he left his work Āmirhāmjā incomplete in 1765 it is also possible that he died in that year or shortly after. Saiýad Hāmjā the only other Dobhāṣī poet in the 18th century wrote with respect of Garibullāh when he started work on the unfinished text of Garibullāh, as his predecessor and 'guru' or master. Thus there is every reason to believe that Garibullāh is the first poet in Dobhāṣī literature.

Garibullāh, therefore, is an innovator to the extent that he was the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣī. The themes he wrote about however, were those which had been developed by the earlier Muslim poets who wrote in Bengali. It is important to note that Garibullāh wrote entirely in Dobhāṣī. The only other 18th century Muslim poet who made use of Dobhāṣī wrote first in standard Bengali.[1] His second work was the completion of the poem Āmirhāmjā which had been left incomplete by Garibullāh. This is Saiýad Hāmjā's first composition in Dobhāṣī. His two later works were both written in Dobhāṣī. It appears therefore that the Dobhāṣī literature of the 18th century belongs entirely to Garibullāh and Saiýad Hāmjā.

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1. The first book of Hāmjā is Madhumālater Kathā, popularly called Madhumālatī. A manuscript of the book has been preserved in the library of the India Office London. It is a story of prince Manohar and princess Madhumālatī, The theme of the work is romantic love story.

The literary vogue thus initiated by these two poets developed rapidly in the 19th century. In 1855 the Rev.J.Long, famous for his translation of Nīldarpaṇ, published a catalogue of Dobhāṣī works written before that date.[1] He uses the title "Musalman Bengali Literature" to describe the catalogue he compiled. In the introduction to the catalogue he explains that the works listed were composed by Muslim writers and published from "Musalman presses in Calcutta". He also stated that they had a "wide circulation", especially among the Musalman population. His list comprises a total of 41 works which he called "the principal books in this dialect". Unfortunately he gives neither the date of composition nor the date of publication of the works in his catalogue. His only statement on the subject of date is that the works listed consists of "books and pamphlets which have issued from the press during the last sixty years", i.e., between 1795 and 1855. It is fair to assume that the majority of the works in Long's catalogue belong to the first half of the 19th century. That so many works were published so short a time bears testimoney to the strength of the vogue initiated by Garibullāh and Hāmjā.

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1. Long, J. A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works, Calcutta, 1855

The 41 works listed by Long in his catalogue can be classified in terms of the scheme set out in Chapter II, as follows:

(a) Narrative poems	-	22
(b) Lyric poems	-	1
(c) Instructive or Didactic poems	-	17
(d) Elegiac poem	-	1
Total	-	41

Of the 41 works listed by Long 24 are available in Libraries in England. In all, 290 such works are held in the British Museum, the India Office Library, the library of the University of Cambridge and the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The dates of publication range from 1846 to 1924 and the places of publication include principally Calcutta and Dacca.

The 290 works fall into the following categories:

(a) Narrative poems	-	132
(b) Lyric poems	-	9
(c) Instructive or Didactic poems	-	148
(d) Elegiac poem	-	1
Total	-	290

All these works have been examined but it has not been considered necessary to make detailed reference to all of them. The best known and most representative specimens alone have been used as the basis of the detailed examination of subject matter, style and language contained in later chapters. These representative specimens are the twenty-four works from the Rev. J. Long's catalogue which are available in England.

CHAPTER V

Dobhāṣī Literature: Narrative Poetry.

The eighteenth century, so far as Dobhāṣī literature written by Muslim poets is concerned, belongs to two poets, Garibullāh and Saiẏad Hāmjā. It has been stated that they were not the first poets to write in Dobhāṣī, but they were the first Muslim poets to use that language. They were also the first poets to use Dobhāṣī as their principal language. Poets of the earlier centuries had made only occasional use of Dobhāṣī Garibullāh and Hāmjā made only occasional use of Bengali, except that Hāmjā's first work was in Bengali.

Garibullah has five completed and one incomplete work to his credit. The five completed works are:

(1) Iuchaf - Jelekhā)
(2) Sonābhāner puthi) Narrative poems
(3) Satyapīrer puthi)
(4) Iblich nāmā) Didactic poem
(5) Jaṅga nāmā, Moktāl-hochen.) Elegiac poem

The incomplete work was Āmirhāmjā. To the credit of Saiẏad Hāmjā are two individual works, i.e., works which are wholly his, and a partial work, namely the completed portion of Āmirhāmjā commenced by Garibullāh. Garibullāh wrote in Dobhāṣī and only very occasionally in Bengali, but Saiẏad Hāmjā wrote one work Madhumālatī in standard Bengali.

Saiẏad Hāmjā's two Dobhāṣī works are:

(1) Jaiguner puthi)
(2) Hātemtāi) Narrative poems

All the Dobhāṣī writing of Garibullāh and Hāmjā fall within the category of narrative poem with the exception of Jaṅga nāmā which is to be classified as an elegiac poem, and Ibliachāmā which is didactic. The themes adopted by these two poets however, are not new. All of them had been worked over to a greater or lesser degree by earlier Muslim poets.

Iuchaf-Jelekhā

Garibullāh's Iuchaf-Jelekhā is a poetical romance. It was a very popular and is usually regarded as the finest example of the treatment of its theme in Dobhāṣī.[1] It is composed in the Bengali metres paẏar and tripadī. The whole work consists

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1. There are eight copies of Iuchaf-Jelekhā in the British Museum and India Office Library. The dates of publication of these copies range between 1867 and 1880 and they were published in Calcutta by different institutions. Two copies of Iuchaf-Jelekhā published in Calcutta in 1876 now held in the India Office library have been wrongly catalogued under the authorship of 'Fakir Muhammad'. I compared them with other copies and found the bhanitā of Fakir Garibullāh; the story, language and style are also the same as in the others. In the library of the University of Dacca there is a manuscript of Iuchaf-Jelekhā. The date of the scribe of this manuscript is 1219 hijra or 1800 A.D. (Hossain, S.S. (Edited) A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscript, Dacca, 1964, p.17)

of approximately two thousand couplets. The edition of Iuchaf-Jelekhā summarised here is that printed and published by the Kamalā Kāntā press in Calcutta in the Bengali era 1286, 1879 A.D.

At the beginning of Iuchaf-Jelekhā, the poet pays his respects to Allah, the prophet Mahammad and his chief associates and also to his spiritual guide Barakhā Gājī. In different parts of this poem Garibullāh states that he met Gājī who ordered him to compose the poem.[1] How the order was communicated to him is not clear. It maybe that Gājī appeared to him in a dream but this information is not given to us. All that we know is that Gājī was a Muslim saint and the spiritual guide of Garibullāh.

In Iuchaf-Jelekhā the poet does not narrate the story as from himself, but through the mouth of Badar who himself was venerated as a saint.[2] Badar tells the love story of Iuchaf and Jelekhā to Barakhā Gājī in order to prove the glory of asceticism, and to encourage him to be free from worldly illusions, and to accept the life of a 'fakir' or ascetic. Gājī is eager to hear the story and enthusiastically requests Badar to narrate it. Then Badar bows his head to Allah and tells the story, the gist of which is as follows.

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1. Iuchaf-Jelekhā - pp.52, 56 and 59
2. In Bengal, especially in the East, Badar is still a very popular saint of rivers. Boatmen when sailing their boats invoke the name of Badar along with those of Allah and his prophet. the formula of invocation is: "Allah nabī pāc pīr badar badar"

Hajrat Iẏākub was a rich man who lived in the land of Kenān. He was a prophet of Allah. He was a pious man and used to pray to Allah and read the Koran regularly. He had two wives and ten sons. His youngest wife Rāhelā had no child and was naturally very eager to have one. Her husband advised her to lead a pious life and pray to Allah for a child. She followed his advice, led a very restrained life and even gave up the habit of 'pānguā', i.e., eating betel nut, and observed 'rojā' (fasting) and 'nāmāj' (prayer). Allah became very pleased with her and decided to award a very beautiful son to her. His name was Iuchaf.

Allah took the beauty from his own body and asked the angel Jibril to call all the creatures of the world so that he might bestow his beauty on them. Birds, beasts, fishes, crocodiles, serpents and all other creatures of the world rushed to Allah to receive his gift. The demons and angels began fighting over their share of the beauty to be bestowed by Allah. Allah divided his beauty into six parts of which he gave four parts to Iuchaf alone and two parts to the rest of the creatures of the world.

When Iuchaf was born he appeared so beautiful that even the sun and the moon became ashamed before him. Five years after his birth Rāhelā gave birth to another son who was named Emāni.

Iuchaf was very dearly loved by his father. One night Iuchaf saw in a dream that eleven stars together with the sun and the moon were prostrating themselves before him. Hearing his dream his father told him that in future he would become a King and his eleven brothers would be his servants. He also asked him not to disclose his dream to his brothers. But a servant who heard Iý$\bar{a}$kub explain the dream told it to the brothers of Iuchaf. They became very jealous and one day took him from his father into a forest. They beat him cruelly and cast him into a dark pit and subsequently sold him to a merchant. When they returned home they reported to their father that a tiger had devoured him. Iý$\bar{a}$kub did not believe his sons and asked them to bring the tiger to him. They brought an old tiger from the forest, and when Iý$\bar{a}$kub accused the tiger of cruelty it spoke to him and proved its innocence. Then the angel Jibril came to Iý$\bar{a}$kub and told him that Iuchaf was alive and safe, but because Iý$\bar{a}$kub had failed to invoke the name of Allah when he allowed his sons to take Iuchaf with them, he could not inform him where his son was.

Jelekh$\bar{a}$ was a young and very beautiful daughter of the King of Taimuch. She saw Iuchaf in a dream and fell in love with him. She became mad for her lover and refused to marry any person except him. When her father wanted to give her in marriage to $\bar{A}$jij, the prime Minister of the King of Egypt, she

refused. But Iuchaf asked her in a dream to marry Ājij and assured her that he would meet her through him. The angel Jibril also appeared before her in a dream and told her that Allah desired that she should marry Ājij, and that Allah would make him a eunuch so that they would never live together as man and wife. Jelekhā married him but when he went in to her he suddenly became a eunuch. So he built a new palace for his wife and allowed her to live separately.

The merchant in the meantime had taken Iuchaf to Egypt. When he was on his way he saw his face in a mirror and was charmed by his own beauty. Allah became angry with him and decided to punish him for his pride. When the merchant reached Egypt he took Iuchaf to a market place to be sold as a slave. His wonderful beauty created a sensation in the city. Men and women of every age rushed to see him. Jelekhā came on an elephant to see him. She recognised him as her lover whom she had met in her dreams. She persuaded her husband to buy him, and with the help of the angel Jibril he was able to buy him at less than the highest price that was bid and gave him to his wife as a gift.

Jelekhā's love for Iuchaf was one sided. She tried to seduce him and attract him to her in various ways. But as she was the wife of his master, be would not respond. After long and persistent efforts Jelekhā became angry with Iuchaf, and accused him to her husband of attempting to violate her.

Iuchaf proved his innocence through the agency of a child, who was only six months old. Ājij realised that his wife was trying to deceive him. So he took Iuchaf from her and kept him in his own palace. Jelekhā found no peace of mind without Iuchaf. She got him back from her husband and tried again to provoke him to love-making. In the city women were saying that Jelekhā had sought to seduce her slave and was a sinful woman. When Jelekhā heard of the rumours they were circulating about her, she invited them to a banquet at her palace. To each she gave a knife and a lemon and asked them to cut the fruit into pieces. When they were about to do so she ordered Iuchaf to present himself before them, and they were so amazed at his beauty that they cut their hands instead of the fruit.

Iuchaf's repeated refusals made Jelekhā furious and at last she had him sent to prison. Two young men called Chāki and Bāki, were also in goal with Iuchaf. They saw dreams which he interpreted for them. He explained to them that idol worship was wrong and advised them to accept the religion of Islam. They were convinced and were converted. Iuchaf's interpretations of their dreams came true. Bāki was hanged, as Iuchaf said he would be, and Chāki was released and rewarded by the King. Seven years after this incident the King of Egypt also had a dream. He asked his wise people to explain its meaning, but they were unable to do so. Chāki then told the King about Iuchaf and his power to interpret dreams. The King called Iuchaf to his court

and he explained the King's dream satisfactorily. Iuchaf was released and appointed Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

In the course of time Jelekhā's husband died and she spent all her great wealth in an attempt to win Iuchaf, but in vain. As she grew old she lost her health and with it her beauty and later became blind and insane. One day while Iuchaf was going hunting wild beasts, he met the unhappy Jelekhā in the street. He was moved at the sight of her condition. He converted her to Islam, took her from the street, prayed to Allah for her and all of a sudden she got back her health, beauty and youth. Now Iuchaf fell in love with her, but the more he was attracted the more Jelekhā feigned indifference. Finally, however, they were married and lived happily.

Now there was a severe famine in the country of Kenān and the brothers of Iuchaf came to buy grain from Egypt. Iuchaf recognised them. He first played a trick on them and imprisoned them but subsequently he disclosed his identity to them and persuaded them to bring his father to Egypt where he later settled. After some time Iuchaf became the King of Egypt. For forty long years he lived with Jelekhā as her husband and then died. She followed him very shortly afterwards.

Garibullāh repeatedly says in his poem that he derived his narrative from 'ketāb' i.e., a Persian work.[1] But he does

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1. Iuchaf-Jelekhā - pp.1, 2, 11, 31 etc.,

not mention the name of the work he followed.

The basis of the story of Iuchaf-Jelekhā can be traced to the legends of the Jews in pre-christian ages.[1] It finds distinct form in the Bible whence it was taken up in the Koran in the episode of 'Surātul Yusuf' which in the language of the Koran, is 'the most beautiful of stories'. In the Old Testament of the Bible, in the first book of Moses commonly called Genesis, we find a more detailed and systematic history of Joseph and his predecessors. Joseph's father Jacob was a very wealthy man in Canaan. His youngest wife Rachel bore two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph saw dreams which were of such a nature as to make his ten step-brothers jealous of him. They took him to a forest, cast him into a dark empty pit and later sold him to a merchant. The merchant took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar 'an Officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guards'. Joseph was 'handsome and good looking' and his master's wife attempted to seduce him, but he refused her and in consequence he was thrown into goal. The butler and the baker of Pharaoh were also in the same prison. They each dreamt a dream and Joseph gave them a true interpretation of their dreams. The baker was hanged and the butler was restored to his previous post. The butler had promised to help Joseph to obtain his release from goal, but he

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1. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, 1953, pp.646-48

forgot his promise, and Joseph remained a prisoner. Two years later Pharaoh, the King of Egypt also saw a dream which none of his wise men could explain. Now the butler remembered Joseph and told the Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams. Joseph was summoned to the court, where he interpreted the dream of the Pharaoh, and he was as a reward appointed to a high post. After some time Joseph was reunited with his father and brothers and lived with them happily.

The story of Joseph's power in Egypt and the famine which resulted in his bringing his father and his brothers to live in Egypt is narrated in detail in the Bible. In the Koran and the poems based on the romance of Iuchaf-Jelekhā this part of the story is of comparatively minor importance. In the Bible Potiphar's wife finds no mention in the later part of the history of Joseph; whereas in the romances she is the heroine of the story and has as full a place in the whole treatment of the subject as has Joseph himself. It is significant of the difference between the Biblical and romantic account that the woman who attempts to seduce Joseph is given no personal name in the Bible. She is referred to only as Potiphar's wife. The story in the Koran is the shortest of the three accounts. It is worked out in far less detail than in the Bible and treatment of it differs essentially from that in the later romantic poems.

In the Bible Joseph is painted as a handsome man. In

the Koran greater stress is placed on his physical beauty. There is in the Koran a story not found in the Bible to the effect that the women of Egypt were critical of the wife's passion for a slave. Hearing this rumour the prince's wife invited them to her house and gave a knife to each of them and ordered Iýusuf to appear before them. When they saw him they were amazed at his beauty and cut their hands instead of the fruit and exclaimed - "Allah preserve us! This is no mortal but a gracious angel!" This episode appears in the romantic poems.

The names of the dramatis personae in the Bible, the Koran and Garibullāh's poem are, subject to linguistic changes, the same in all three versions with one exception. In the Bible the name of the captain of the guard is Potiphar, the name which occurs in the Koran is Ājij meser. Garibullāh follows the Koran and uses the name Ājij whom he makes prime Minister of Egypt. The linguistic affinity between the following sets of names is obvious: Joseph, Iusuf, Iuchaf; Jacob, Iýākub; Rachel, Rāhelā; Benjāmin, Emāni.

It appears that the story of Joseph in the Bible and of Iusuf in the Koran were developed as a romantic love story first in Persian literature. "This legend" observed E.G.Browne, "greatly expanded and idealised from its original basis, has always been a favourite subject with the romantic poets of Persia

and Turkey nor was Firdausi (as Dr. Ethe has pointed out) the first Persian poet to handle it, Abul Mu'ayyad of Balkh and Bakhtiāri of Ahwáz having both, according to one manuscript authority, already made it the subject of a poem".[1] Firdausi the famous poet of the Persian epic 'Sāhnāmā' wrote a Masnavi on Iusaf-Jelekhā. The date of his poem is not recorded "but the poem is the work of the author's old age. He died in 411 (1020-1 A.D.) or, according to others in 416 (1025-6 A.D.)".[2] After Firdausi the story was taken up by many Persian poets. "But of these renderings of the well-known tale Jami's deservedly holds the highest place, and on it his reputation largely rests".[3] This story was also very popular in the Turkish literature and many poets composed poems on the subject.[4] Like Jami's work on Iusaf-Jelekhā in the Persian language, the work of Hamd-Ullāh Chelebi was very popular in the Turkish language. He composed his poem "nine years later than Jami"[5] i.e., in 1491-92 A.D.

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1. Browne, E.G. - A Literary History of Persia, Cambridge University, 1928, Vol.II, p.146
2. Gibb, E.J.W. - A History of Ottoman Poetry, London, 1902, Vol.II, p.146
3. Browne, E.G. op.cit., Vol.III, p.522
4. Gibb, E.J.W. Ibid., p.148-50
5. Ibid., p.146

It has already been stated[1] that the story of Iuchaf and Jelekhā was introduced into Bengali literature some time between 1389 and 1409 by Sāh Maḥammad Sagīr. His work on this subject is a romantic love story. The second poet who worked on this theme in Bengali literature was Ābdul Hākim of the seventeenth century. Both of these poets wrote principally in the traditional middle Bengali language. Garibullāh is, as far as can be traced, the third poet to take up this theme. After him many writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries wrote works on the same theme both in prose and poetry.[2] These later works are composed in standard Bengali of the time. Garibullāh's work therefore, is unique in that it is the only one known to have been written in Dobhāṣī, though as is pointed out in another place[3] he made occasional use of Bengali in certain contexts.

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1. See chapter II p. 31-2
2. The following principal works are available in the British Museum and India Office library: (a) Isaf-Jelekhā by Harimohan Karmaker, published in Calcutta in 1855. This is a prose work of 148 pages. In the preface of the work the author has said that he followed some Persian poem. (b) Jelekhā by Abdul Latif, published in Calcutta in 1876. This is a prose work of 232 page In the preface the author says that he followed the Persian poem of Jāmi. (c) Iusaf-Jelekhā by Dhirendra nath Mitra, published in Calcutta in 1912. This is three act drama of 190 pages. In the introduction the author says that he followed the Persian poem of Jāmi. (d) Prem-Sindhu by Munshi Hafejullah Pandit, published in Rangpur in 1914. This is a poem of 263 pages. The poet says in an introduction that he followed the Persian poem of Jāmi. The christian missionaries also wrote tracts with this story, but they followed the Bible. One such tract in prose is noteworthy. It is called Josepher Itihās, published by the Bible Translation Society, Calcutta in 1875.
3. see page 96

Though Garibullāh's principal aim, as stated in the beginning of the poem, was to narrate the glory of religious philosophy and to propagate the idea of asceticism, his work is certainly not one of religious philosophy, nor can it be held that the reading is likely to promote thoughts of asceticism. It is also noteworthy that nothing is said in the poem proper about asceticism, and none of the characters is an ascetic.

As a work of literature Garibullāh's poem has a number of artistic features and literary merits which call for consideration in some detail.

The fatherly affection of Iýākub and his ever trembling heart for his tiny beloved son Iuchaf have been expressed with a fine delicacy. Though the step-brothers are presented as a group and are not individually differentiated, they are well presented. Their jealousy and passion for revenge are handled dramatically and the arguments they hold with the merchants at the time of selling their small brother are lively and convincing. The love of Jelekhā, her single-minded devotion to her lover and her agony at his refusal to consent to her advances are always moving. The poet however, is objective in his depiction of her character. He does not raise the moral issue which is involved in her attitude towards Iuchaf, and at no point does he condemn her. He leaves the moral issue to be considered and decided by Jelekhā herself. At first Jelekhā appears in the poem as a beautiful and charming young girl of a rich and aristocratic

family. She is very passionate by nature and is eager to satisfy her desires. Her husband being a eunuch had no charm for her. The beauty of Iuchaf attracted her and she wanted to gratify her youthful desires with him. She employed her wit, wealth and feminine charm in her many attempts to capture the heart of her lover. The repeated refusal of Iuchaf created anger and heart-burning in her, and she had him sent to prison on false charges. But when he was in prison she sent food and clothing for him and tried in every possible way to give him comfort there. The struggle between her desires and her moral sense is depicted with dramatic quality. She was unhappy when she was with Iuchaf because he would not gratify her desires, and more unhappy when he was separated from her and was sent to prison because she knew in her heart that he was innocent, and that she herself was responsible for his sufferings. The point is that though much that she did may be considered reprehensible she was genuinely in love with Iuchaf, and any suffering which he had to undergo was an even greater suffering to her. She had to suffer greatly and for a very long time, and one feels that at the end of her life her love for Iuchaf has been purged of the sensuality which marked her youthful attitude towards him.

The character of Iuchaf is realistic and beautifully depicted. His natural sense of morality, his patience and the expression of his sympathy towards a devoted woman are

convincingly expressed. Iuchaf however, is not presented as a mortal without human weakness. Particularly dramatic is the scene in which the human in Iuchaf was on the point of surrendering to the seductive appeals of Jelekhā. He could resist no longer and would almost certainly have succumbed had not he been sustained at the last minute by that busy deus ex machina Jibril. Iuchaf in the event did not yield to Jelekhā's entreaties, but the author was able to avoid presenting him as a prig or in any way as a self-righteous individual. It is not, therefore, a question of a conflict between a sensual female and a male who is above temptation. The story requires that Iuchaf be preserved from sin and it is to the credit of the poet that he was able to accommodate the demands of his material without presenting Iuchaf as something less than human. Throughout the poem love is presented as a noble emotion, and though the interference of divine power is needed at various stages, one is left with the feeling that sinful though Jelekhā might have been, love in her was much more than mere sensuality.

The real beauty of this poem is expressed where the poet conjures up the atmosphere of Bengal, his own country. It is interesting to note that though the story is of Egyptian origin and has come into Bengal through Persian and Turkish sources, the Bengali poet naturalises it in his own locality, and gives it a local colour. The country-side is Bengal and his characters are Bengalis in their beliefs, customs, sense

of values and dress. He has described the beauty of Jelekhā in a traditional Bengali manner. Her face is like the moon, her hair is like a peacock's feathers, her eyes flutter like those of the 'Khanjan' bird, her lips are like the petals of lotus flower, her voice is as sweet as 'amrit'. Her ornaments are Bengali. She toilets like Bengali girls. She uses 'anjan' (collyrium) in her eyes and rubs her face with the end of her 'sāṛī' and eats 'pānguā' (betelnut).

Jelekhā's emotional expressions are like those of traditional Bengali heroines. She expressed her feelings whether of love or resentment, that undefinable mental condition the poets call either 'mān' or 'abhimān', in language which might have been used by Rādhā herself. The passage quoted might easily have found a place in the Vaiṣṇava padābalī.

e rūp mohan bese chile tumi kon deśe
e rūp gaṛila kon janā/
hāsiẏā pāgal kara bhuban bhulāte pāra
barṇa jiniẏā kāchā sonā//
e rūp dekhite mati se ye keman yubatī
saṅge laha kariẏā cheheli/
citta corā nām tor citta curi kaile mor
kul sil sakali majāli//[1]

1.This beauty (of yours) in a charming guise, who created it and what country have you been living in.Your smile drives me mad. You can charm the whole universe.Your colour surpasses that of fine gold.The sight of your beauty allures her and the young maid is overwrought (and she askes you)to accept her as your companion.You should be called thief of the heart because you have stolen my heart and destroyed all that I hold dear, my obedience to my family and my maidenly innocence.

Jelekhā's intuitions are also like Bengali women. When her husband proved to be a eunuch, he requested her to go back to her father's house, but she did not agree. Like Bengali woman she thought people would blame her and that neighbours, friends and relatives would speak ill of her. She says to her husband:

āmiyāba bāper bāṛī śona diẏā man/
sethaẏ āmāke loke karibe ganjan//
kutumba sākkhāte dos dībeka tāmām /
egānā begānā sab karibe badnām//[1]

Though she had no love for her husband still she preferred to live in his house.

The physical beauty of Iuchaf has also been described in the Bengali traditional way:

mukh niramal yena purṇimār śaśī/
bhomar guñjare yena dui cakkhe basi//
bhuru dui yoṛā yena kāmer kāmān/
sthala padma yena terā duti kān
ati khīṇ mājā yena sekāri bāghinī/

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1. Translation: Listen to me carefully, if I go to my father's house people there will criticise. They will all blame me in the presence of my family and relatives and strangers alike will all give me a bad name.

calan khanjan here bhole sab muni//
sugaṭhan matir mālā śarir nirmal/
yubatī nā bāndhe man dite cāhe kol//[1]

When Iuchaf was brought to Egypt by the merchant the women of the city rushed to see him. They came out in the stree t in such a hurry that they omitted to complete their toilets. Some came with combs in their hands, some had darkened only one eye with collyrium and their 'sindur' (vermilion) decorations were incomplete, some had a 'sankha' in one hand and were holding golden bracelets in the other, some had put 'nūpur' on one leg and were holding the other in their hand. This description is very similar to that of the women who rushed to see the beautiful hero Sundar of Bhārat Chandra's Bidyā sundar poem composed in 1752-53.[2] The date of composition of Garibullāhs Iuchaf-Jelekhā is not known with certainty. So it is not possible to say who followed whom. In this connection it should be remembered that both the poets belonged to the same district and were probably men of the same age.

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1. Translation: Your face is as bright as the full moon and your eyes are black as if bees are buzzing round them. Your eye-brows are like the bow of Kāma and your ears are like lotus which grows on shore. Your waist is as slim as that of a prowling tigress. Your step is as light as a bird's and when they see it e ven sages forget all else. Your body is as perfect as a well made string of pearls. A maid therefore, cannot control herself and longs for your embrace.
2. The greatest work of Bhārat Chandra is called Annadā Mangal kabya which is divided into three parts. The second part is called Bidya sundar upakhyan or the story of Bidya and Sundar.

When Jelekhā failed to attract Iuchaf to her an old woman came to her and proposed to help her in her love-making with Iuchaf. She is an old and clever woman. She eats 'pānguā' (betelnut). She is well dressed and ornamented with the clothing and jewelry of medieval Bengal, like 'pāṭer sāṛī' (silken sāṛī), 'tārbālā' (golden bangle), 'bāju banda' (golden armle t), 'kācercuri' (glass bangle). She is toileted with 'sindur' (vermilion) and 'kājal' (collyrium). The poet has painted the old woman in a lively manner. Throughout the Middle Bengali literature this type of character plays an important part in the sports of love. The earliest one is found in Srīkṛṣṇakīrtan, 'Baṛāi', and the most popular one is 'Hīrā', a character in Bhārat Candra's Bidyasundar poem.

In the story of Iuchaf-Jelekhā women travel in palanquins. At the time of marriage the bride Jelekhā was beautified like a Bengali bride. During the marriage ceremony 'sāriṅgā', 'sitār', 'mṛidaṅga' and 'mandirā' were played. These musical instruments are peculiar to India. The peculiar Bengali food 'dālbhāt' were cooked in a pan called 'hāṛā' which is also a peculiar pan of Bengal. In the marriage festival cannons and guns were fired for pleasure. The story of the poem is based on pre-historic legends before gun-powder was invented.[1] The poet

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1. There is no solid and sufficient evidence on which one can pin down the invention of gunpowder to one man. It is generally believed that Berthold Schwartz, a German monk invented it some time in the early 14th century. "The first trustworthy document relative to the use of gunpowder in Europe" is belong to the February 11, 1326.

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belonged to the eighteenth century when the custom of firing guns and cannons in social ceremonies was perhaps popular. Thus he has committed an anachronism in his poem. He committed a similar mistake when he made Iuchaf convert his co-prisoners 'chāki' and 'bāki' to Islam.[1]

The natural atmosphere painted in this poem is also Bengali. When Jelekhā went to the forest she saw peacocks dancing, heard 'kokils' singing and bees humming on the flowers. Like Rādhā her desire for union with her lover increased tremendously in this environment.

The similes and analogies in this poem are peculiar to the Bengali literature. The proverbs used in this poem give it distinct local colouring. Some examples may be cited here - (a) 'bidyāý paṇḍit yena sarasvatī pār' (b) 'bhuru duti joṛā yena kāmer Kāmān' (c) 'mānuṣ balaha kibā paśu pakṣi ādi/ yauban nā rahe bāndhā janam abadhi//' (d) 'yeman karibe bhāi pābe āpnāý/ ropile bābḷāgāch bel kothā pāý//' (e) 'jalahīn pukur paraśe kon jan/ dhanahīn puruṣer nāhi thāke mān//' etc.,

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continuation of footnote....
In India fire arms were first used in 1526 in the "decisive battle of Panipat in which Ibrahim, Sultan of Delhi was killed and his army routed by Baber the Mogul, who possessed both great and small fire arms". The Encyclopaedia Britanica, Vol.XII, 11th edition, Cambridge, 1910, pp.723-24.

1. The religion of Islam was introduced and preached by prophet Mahammad (570-632 A.D.) Iuchaf is a character of pre-Islamic age, and long before the birth of Mahammad and his religion.

There are certain features of the poem which are surprising and difficult to account for. The role of supernatural agents, their interferance in the action of men and women of the story and the exaggerations of the poet are likely to strain the imagination of even a sympathetic reader. The angel Jibril appears frequently to Iẏākub, Iuchaf and even to Jelekhā whenever they face difficult situations. When the step-brothers of Iuchaf sold him to a merchant and gave a false statement to their father that a tiger had devoured him, Jibril came to Iẏākub and told him that Iuchaf was alive and safe. Iẏākub asked his sons to bring the tiger who had eaten Iuchaf. They brought it as if it were a sheep and more surprising still, the tiger spoke to Iẏākub and proved his innocence. Jelekhā agreed to marry Āẓiz, only when Jibril communciated to her the wish of Aḷlah. Jelekhā±s husband Āẓiz became a eunuch because Allah did not want his union with Jelekhā. When the step-brothers of Iuchaf was beating him severely in the forest the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, angels and fairies wept for his suffering. Iuchaf's price as a very beautiful slave-boy was high in the market of the city of Egypt, but Āẓiz succeeded in buying him at a cheaper price with the help of Jibril though the angel did not show himself at the time. One day due to Jelekhā's persistent inducement Iuchaf was almost going to submit to her desire. At that moment Jibril appeared and made Iuchaf

cautious, but Jelekhā neither saw him nor heard his voice. Iuchaf met old and blind Jelekhā in the street and within a moment she got back her youth, beauty and sight when he prayed to Allah for her.

The role of Allah is not insignificant in the development of the plot of Iuchaf-Jelekhā. Though he does not appear as do the deities of Maṅgal Kābya, he is in places depicted by the poet as spiteful and ready to wreak his own temper on human beings. The manner in which he is brought into the story is far from orthodox Muslim belief. Allah became displeased because Iẏākub forgot to utter his name while he was allowing Iuchaf to go to the forest with his step-brothers, and for that fault he lost his beloved son. Iuchaf was proud of his beauty and for that reason Allah got displeased with him, and he had to suffer a lot for that. Thus Allah in this poem is malevolent even to his devout worshippers.. The sufferings of Iẏākub and Iuchaf are severe no doubt, but they are pre-arranged by Allah and for this reason perhaps, they fail to draw the full sympathy of the reader. The poet imagined that Allah had a body and he took away beauty from his body to distribute it among his creatures. This can offend Muslims because according to the conceptions of Islam Allah has no form, no shape or colour, and to imagine such qualities of Allah is utterly irreligious.

The story of the poem is pre-Islamic, but the characters of the story observed the religious duties of Islam. They read the Koran regularly, though historically it did not come into being until the time of prophet Mahammad who lived many centuries later than the historical counterparts of Iẏākub and Iuchaf. They perform 'nāmāj' (ritual kneeling in prayer) and 'rojā' (ritual fasting) which are part of the religious duties prescribed for Muslims. This is a natural anachronism. The poet identified pre-Islamic pious people with pious Muslims.

One striking point of the attitude of the poet is that he is eager to convert people into Islam and to prove the falsehood of idol worship. This attitude of the poet has been expressed through the characters of his poem. The hero of the poem, Iuchaf convinces people of the wrongness of their idolatry and converts them to Islam whenever he gets the chance. While he was in prison 'Bāki' and 'Chāki' requested him to exaplin their dreams, Iuchaf before doing so convinced them of the falsehood of their idol worship, and converted them to Islam. Iuchaf also converted the old and wretched Jelekhā to Islam before he prayed to Allah for the restoration of her health and beauty.

Āmirhāmjār puthi

The story of Āmir Hāmja is the second important traditional theme which was handled in Dobhāṣī in the 18th century. The Āmirhāmjār puthi, which is a voluminous work of some 12,500 couplets, is the work of Fakir Garibullāh, who wrote the first 4,500 couplets approximately, and of Saiýad Hāmjā who completed the poem after the death of Fakir Garibullāh. The version of the poem on which this examination is based is that published by the Bidyāratna Press in Calcutta in 1878.[1] Garibullāh, as was his custom, recorded no date for

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1. There are eleven printed copies of Āmirhāmjār puthi in the British Museum and in the India Office library. The dates of publication of these copies range from 1867 to 1886. They were published in Calcutta by the different Institutions. There are two manuscripts of this work in the library of the University of Dacca, East Pakistan (See A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts, (Edited) by S.S.Hussain, Dacca, 1960, pp.4 and 10). The second manuscript is written in Arabic characters. Another manuscript of Āmirhāmjār puthi copied in Persian characters was exhibited at the monthly general meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on 2nd November, 1925, by Khan Sahib Abdul Wali who wrote an article under the title, 'A Bengali Book written in Persian Script', which was published in the journal of the Society in the same year. In this article he said that the manuscript was probably copied 'some time before the Indian Mutiny of 1857'. (See Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New Series, Vol.XXI, Calcutta, 1925).

his part of the composition, but Hamjā's part is precisely dated. He states in the poem that he had almost completed work in 1793 (Māgh 1199), but was held up for want of an original work which he needed to refer to, and that in consequence he was unable to finish writing until 1794 (1201 B.S.). The work consists of series of episodes setting forth the warlike exploits of the hero, Āmir Hāmjā; and the gist of it is as follows.

Ābdal Matleb, a pious man of Makkā in the country of Arabia was the predecessor of Mahammad, the prophet of Islam. He prayed to the Lord for a son, and eventually his prayer was granted. The son who was named Āmir Hāmjā was the uncle of Mahammad, being born before him and in the same branch of the family. He became a great warrior and destroyed many infidels (kāfer). In the beginning of the work after describing the birth of Hāmjā, the poet gave a catalogue of the wars he fought: Hāmjā fought, defeated and coverted to Islam the infidel Kings, Makbel Halabi, Manjer Sāh of Emen, Hossām and Ommar Mādi. Hearing of his heroism Naoserā , the King of Madinā sent him an invitation which Hāmjā accepted. The daughter of Naoserā fell in love with him and one day a royal guard saw him meeting secretly with the princess. Hāmjā fled to his home but his conduct made Naoserā his enemy and he was

subsequently involved in many battles with him. At this point the poet presents the history of the family of Naoserā̃.

There was a King in the city of Madinā called Kobād. His minister Baktajāmāl killed his friend Ālkas. In course of time Bojarce Meher, the posthumous son of Ālkas became a great and learned man. He could describe the secret thoughts of the human mind, reveal the unknown past and predict the future. He developed this capacity by studying a book called Jāmāsā, composed by Fālātun, a physician. Once the King had a dream. All the wise men of his Kingdom failed to interpret it. Bojarce Meher promised to give a satisfactory explanation to it if the King punished the assassin of his father. The King agreed and he pointed out Baktajāmāl as his father's assassin. The King sentenced him to death and appointed Bojarce Meher as minister in his stead. After some time a son was born to the King and named Naoserā̃. By the order of the King Bojarce Meher drew up a ṭālenāmā, a sort of horoscope of the child, in which he predicted that Naoserā̃ would be a great warrior and King of seven countries. He also prophesied that a great warrior named Hāmjā would be born in a city of Arabia who would conquer Naoserā̃'s Kingdom and would destroy his prestige. Hearing this the King ordered him to kill Hāmjā as soon as he was born. Bojarce Meher saw in his secret book that Hāmjā would live for 198 years and would destroy many infidels. He had great

respect for him so he did not kill him but helped his parents financially so that the child could grow in health and comfort.

After the death of Kobād his son Naoserā became King of Madinā. His daughter Mehernegār who was very beautiful fell in love with Hāmjā from the accounts of his fame which she had been told.

One day while Hāmjā was playing with his friend and classmate Ommar Ummiýā, who knew jugglery, they suddendly came across a horse 'as big as a mountain' which had previously belonged to the prophet Ishāk. Hāmjā, also found two swords, call 'cham chām' and 'Kam Kām' respectively, in a magic house in the garden. From then on he used this horse and the two swords in his many battles. He defeated many kings and warriors and converted them to his faith, Islam. Hearing the fame of his heroism Ommar Mādi of Karob city who ruled over half of Arabia invited him to join his army. Hāmjā, in reply, asked him to accept Islam and to 'give-up idol worship'. Ommar refused, whereupon Hāmjā attacked him, defeated him and converted him to Islam 'along with his 44 brothers'.

By this time King Naoserā had become thoroughly alarmed by the stories he had heard of the heroism of Hāmjā, so he deemed it politic to invite him to his palace. Hāmjā accepted the invitation and went, but his visit did not open propitiously for he was insulted by the King's son, Kobād, and one of his

friends. In the meantime, however, he had met Mehernegār, Naoserā's daughter, with whom he exchanged rings, though not until he had converted her to Islam. One of the royal guard saw the exchange of rings and immediately informed the King. Hāmjā was obliged to flee. He was pursued by Kobād and the army of the King; and in the battle that followed he was entirely successful. We are told that fifty-two thousand soldiers of Naoserā's army were slain. Naoserā renewed his invitation to Hāmjā, and promised him the hand of his daughter in marriage on condition that he first killed Landor, the nephew of the King of Sarandip, who was a great warrior and who was threatening his Kingdom. Hāmjā agreed, but before he left Sarandip he met the sage Bojarce Meher who asked him into his house. While he was there, the hero was drugged by Bojarce Meher who while he was still unconscious injected some substance known as Jahar mahrā into his arm. The effect of the injection was to render the hero immune to poison. This was fortunate for after passing through many hazards and dangers on the way to Sarandip, King Gostahām administered poison to him in his food. Thus the timely intervention of Bojarce Meher saved Hāmjā's life, who after he had recovered from the shock proceeded to defeat Prince Landor and convert him to Islam. Naoserā did not honour his promise as he had in the meanwhile invited Ādich, King of Eunān, to marry his daughter.

The princess however, was not left resourseless. The prophet Ibrāhim appeared to her in a dream and advised her to write to Hāmjā and suggest to him that he should dig a tunnel into her apartments inthe palace. To ensure that the tunnel was built Allah ordered his angels to go to the assistance of Hāmjā and dig the tunnel for him. It was completed just in time, for Hāmjā emerged in the princess's apartments on the very night fixed for her marriage to Ādich. The couple eloped together and fled to Hāmjā's home where they were married.

Ādich drew out his army and pursued Hāmjā, but he was defeated and forcibly converted to Islam. On his way back from the field of battle Hāmjā met a cowherd who was in love with the daughter of the headman of his village. She returned his affection but the father had forbidden the marriage. Hāmjā hearing the story had pity on the young man; whereupon he converted the cowherd, the headman and his family and all the village to Islam, and gave the girl to the cowherd in marriage.

Naos erā̃ now feeling that discretion was the better part of valour proceeded to Makkā where he paid his respects to Hāmjā. Once he had made his peace Naoserā̃ invited Hāmjā to attack the King of Rome. Accordingly Hāmjā went Rome, overthrew the King and converted him to Islam. On his return Hāmjā went by way of Egypt in order to collect certain revenues which were due to him. There however, he was captured by the Egyptian monarch who ordered him to be poisoned. The report

that Hāmjā was dead soon spread to Madinā to the great joy of Naoserā and his ministers, and Naoserā immediately asked Jepin Bādśāh to marry his daughter.

The prophet Ibrāhim asked Johrā, the daughter of the King of Egypt in a dream to help Hāmjā and to accept Islam. She embraced Islam and helped Hāmjā to be free. Hāmjā defeated the King and asked him to accept Islam., He refused and was killed by his daughter Johrā! Hāmjā gave the Kingdom to Nachir, younger brother of the King, and at his earnest request married his daughter.

Hāmjā returned to home and fought Jepin. He was wounded in the battle field and after his recovery he recieved help from a fairy King, Ārjāk, of the fairy land called Sāhārasthān. Ārjāk had been suckled by the mother of Hāmjā in his childhood. With the help of Ārjāk he defeated Jepin who fled from the battlefield. Soon after this battle the King ~~of~~ Ārjāk was dethroned by a demon called Āfrit. Hāmjā went to fight the demon. He was carried by the fairies through the air to Sāhārasthān. He said to his friends that he would return home after 18 days, but he did not take the name of Allah and for this fault of his he had to face many difficulties, and to stay there for 18 years instead of 18 days.

Hāmjā's people at home were worried at his long absence. Bojarce Meher came to know 'from his secret book' the secret of his delay in Sāhārasthān. He advised the people to go to a fort called Tanjā and live there till Hāmjā returned.

Hāmjā at last defeated the demon, recovered the Kingdom for Ārjāk who rewarded him with a cap and a whip. The King had received the cap 'from prophet Cholemān'. It had the wonderful property of making any body who wore it invisible. Hāmjā married Tārā, daughter of the King of the fairy land and lived with her. She bore him a daughter named Kurchi. One day he remembered Mehernegār and spoke about her to Tārā. She became jealous and rebuked him for allowing separation from a human being to cause him pain. Hāmjā got angry with her and left the place for home.

On his way home Hāmjā met Khoāj Khejer, a saint who became his spiritual guide. The saint told him the story of the prophet Mahammad's birth and described his glory. He then asked him to go to the country of the demons to fight them and to convert them to Islam. Hāmjā fought with them for a long time. In course of his fight he was captured by a demon chief who kept him on the top of a hill. A giant bird called 'chimorg' rescued him from there. Hāmjā permitted one of the defeated demons to marry a fairy who bore a horse to him called Āskar. The horse-son of the demon killed his father when he heard him conspiring to kill Hāmjā. Āskar then went to Hāmjā to offer his service. Khoāj shod the horse and told Hāmjā that he would die the day the horse lost a shoe. On his way home Hāmjā met Chāfā bibi, sister of Khoāj Khejer and a woman saint who helped

him to cross seven very dangerous rivers. After 18 long years he at last came back to his country and met his family and people in the fort of Tanjā.

When Naoserā heard that Hāmjā had come back he became afraid, because during his absence he had acted with enmity against his people. His clever minster Baktāk advised him to make friendship with the King of the city of Damāsk, whose name was Hamum and whom he declared to be as dangerous as the ~~the~~ angel of death. He also commanded a large and powerful army.

This marks the end of the part of the poem which was written by Fakir Garibullāh.

Saiẏad Hāmjā took up the poem when Garibullāh left off. At the beginning of his composition he paid respect and tribute to his predecessor in the following words: "He is the friend of Allah; his name is Garibullāh. His home is in Bāliẏā Hāfejpur. His heart was enlightened and his tongue was melliflous in his verses. Bara Khāgāji helped him. He wrote the book Āmir hāmjā in verse. The book he was following was imcomplete. If he had had the complete book, he would have strung a garland of poetry like a string of pearls. When people read or hear how far he has strung the garland of poetry, they are enchanted. Those who have heard the first part of the story, are eager to hear the end of it. ~~They say that they do not know what happened in the end~~. They say that they do

not know what happened in the end. Where and with whom did Āmir Hāmjā fight? People enquire here and there, but no one has attempted to complete the tale. There are plenty of learned capable and artistic people but none of them has tried to complete it. When I saw how eager people were for it, I too wondered how the book could be completed. Their request became insistent. I could not disappoint them. A desire to write poetry came upon me. I am extremely ignorant. I do not know anything. How am I to complete the story in verse? I could not, however, disappoint people. That is why I started to write verse. I crave your indulgence for my clumsiness, O my predecessor. Your forgiveness lends life to my lines. Sāhā Garibullāh is the master of verses and my 'pīr' (admitted superior), his poetry is much acclaimed. My poetry is inferior to his; it conveys only the outline of the tale. On his part Sāhā Garibullāh has presented the battles of Āmir, henceforward Hāmjā, the slave of Hāmjā, relates the battles of that high-born man".

Saiẏad Hāmjā began his story with the description of the physical size and strength of the giant King Hamum. His body was 252 feet tall, he wielded a club 56,000 pounds in weight. Once he stood on two bricks of gold and 40 great warriors caught hold of one of his legs, then he shook his leg and hurled them off. Hāmjā invited Hamum to accept the religion of prophet Ibrāhim, but he refused. A furious battle followed. Ominar

Eunāni, a son of Hāmjā, whom the daughter of the King of Egypt bore to him, came to help his father and ultimately Hamum was defeated. Returning from his victory over Hamum, Hāmjā attacked the capital of Jepin, who fled from the field. His palace was plundered by the men of Hāmjā, who captured women they found there and married them..

Hāmjā's campaigns continued for ages. He defeated infidel Kings one after another and either converted them to his faith or killed them if they refused to accept it. Once while his men were engaged in a battle Jepin tried to capture his beloved wife Mehernegār. She resisted him and was wounded and died. Hāmjā became mad with grief. Life lost all charm for him. The prophet Ibrāhim appeared to him in a dream, and tried to convince him that it was shameful to refuse the call of life for a woman, but he did not agree and devoted himself to the service of her grave, and became a mendicant ('fakir'). His people were very distressed to see his condition, but Bojarche Meher assured them that Hāmjā would recover from his grief and became normal again after 40 days. So it was.

40 days after the death of Meher negār, Hāmjā returned to his normal state of mind and resumed his fights with infidel Kings. In some of the battles he was captured by infidel Kings but he was always set free by their daughters or sisters who loved him and whom he married mostly after winning the battle. He suffered most when he was captured by Kajch, King of the city

of Ujānī, because he did not agree to commit adultery with princess Aurangi who tried to seduce him.

One of his remarkable campaigns was against a woman warrior called Gilsoār. She was the daughter of Ganjāī, King of the city of Gilāl. After a furious battle she was defeated and married him. Hāmjā fought another remarkable battle against a 'firingī' chief called Marjuk. He was 270 feet tall and had 70 sons and grandsons, each of them being 120 to 150 feet tall. Hāmjā defeated them and converted them all to his faith.

King Naosherā however, had not forsaken his enmity against Hāmjā. He took refuge in the courts of infidel Kings, one after another, and when Hāmjā defeated them he fled to yet another. At last he became so distressed that he had to earn his bread by his own physical labour. Once Hāmjā found him working in a forest. He took pity on him and brought him to his tent treated him with respect, and sent him back to his capital. The King gave Hāmjā his younger daughter Meher Āfjun in marriage.

Naosherā's cunning minister Baktāk died and Bojarce Meher was held responsible for his death and sentenced to lose his sight. With the help of Hāmjā Bojarce Meher went to 'Makkā' to get a blessing from Mahammad, who at the time was only 40 days old. Bojarce Meher took the dust from his feet and rubbed it on his eyes and prayed to Allah for his sight. Allah spoke to the sage in secret and told him that the boon he asked for

was trivial, and suggested that if he had asked for it all the dead would be raised to life again. Nevertheless his request for the restoration of his sight was granted to him.

Hāmjā however, still continued his wars of conquest and conversion. His next adversary was the man-eating King of Rokhān, who attacked the hero with his army of tigers. The result was inevitable. The King was defeated and converted. Thus Hāmjā fought on till he came to the very ends of the earth, to that dark place which no human could enter, which the poet names Kokāf. So Hāmjā being human had perforce to return home. When he got there he found that his old enemy Naoserā and his old friend Bojarce Meher were both of them dead. But by now the prophet was preaching Islam, and, surprisin though it may seem in view of all that had gone before, Hāmjā himself was converted and entered the service of the prophet.

In one of the battles he fought with the enemies of Islam on behalf of the prophet, he killed an infidel named Borhān, who was the son of Hendā, the daughter of the King of Rome. In order to take revenge Hendā attacked Madinā with a large army. The battle which ensued was to prove something of a disaster for Mahammad and fatal for Hāmjā. Such was the admiration of the prophet for the prowess of his uncle Hāmjā that he boasted to his followers that however, great the strength of their enemies, the valour and strength of Hāmjā would ensure victory. This boast enraged Allah. Hāmjā's miraculous horse lost a shoe

and in accordance with the earlier prophecy Hāmjā had to die. He fell from the horse into a ditch where Hendā herself was lying in wait. She struck and killed him, and then proceeded to cut his body into pieces. The enemy then commenced to throw stones at the prophet and broke his teeth, the beauty of which had apparently also been the subject of an ill-considered boast. The poem ends here with a pointing of the moral that all power rests with Allah, and that to boast of human attributes, even those of the prophet himself, is sin which must be punished. So Hāmjā died and the prophet was taught the lesson of humility.

The long narrative of Āmirhāmjār puthi has very little foundation in historical fact, but it is not altogether without it. There are some historical persons and events in the poem but they are very much exaggerated and magnified by the poets. The historical Hāmjā was the son of Abūl Muttālib and the uncle and foster brother of prophet Mahammad. He is very little known in history but "tradition adds in the effort to glorify this hero of the earliest day of Islam, --- At first, like the other Hashimūs, he adopted a hostile attitude to the new creed. But revolting aginst the extravagant attitude of Abu Djahl, he is said to have attached himself to the Prophet two (according to others six) years after the first revelation. He migrated with him to Medīna and at first led an obscure and miserable existence there". He was a valiant soldier. "This quality won him the title of 'Lion of God and his Prophet', which soon

found a place in poetry. --- His fame as a soldier is particularly associated with the battle of Badar, where he and 'Ali shared the honours. --- He met his fate at the battle of Uhud where he wrought wonders of valour. The negro Wahshī pierced him with a javelin, tore his breast open and brought his still beating heart to Hind, the Mother of Mu'āwiya who buried her teeth in it."[1]

The battle of Uhud occurred in the 3rd Hijra i.e., 625 A.D. and was disastrous for the prophet Mahammad and his followers. Mahammad's teeth were broken and a rumour spread that he had fallen. Fortunately he was "saved from the worst but he had to lament the loss of many of his followers including his uncle Hamza, a loss which he felt particularly".[2]

The battlefield of Uhud where Hāmjā and other martyrs were buried became a holy place and the death of Hāmjā lingered on in tradition. Every year after the battle "the Prophet went to Uhud to visit his and the other graves and the early caliphs did so also. Muhammad is said to have ordered that the women in lamenting the death of every Ansārī should begin with a lament for Hamza. In this way Uhud became one of the most prominent places of pilgrimage of the Muhammadans. A mosque was built over Hamza's tomb".[3] The people of Medina in

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1. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.II, London, 1927, pp.254-55
2. Ibid., Vol.III, p. 971
3. Ibid., Vol.III, p.971

particular visited Uhud regularly and it became a custom to vow to slaughter a sheep in honour of Hāmjā if they recovered from illness. They still hold a fair in Uhud once a year. "The inhabitants flock thither in crowds and remain for three days, as if they were the feast days of the saint".[1]

Both the poets of Āmirhāmjār puthi say that they composed it according to 'Ketab'ie. a Persian book. Saiýad Hāmjā says at the beginning of his composition that his predecessor Garibullāh was unable to procure the whole book and for that reason could not complete his composition. At the end of his own portion he says that he had to stop his writing for about a year for want of the book he was following, and after a hard effort he procured it and then was able to complete his task. It is, therefore, certain that their ~~srouce~~ source was some Persian text but neither of them recorded the name of it.

The adventures of Āmir Hāmjā were a popular subject in Persian literature but, curiously enough, the authorship of them in that language is a matter of controversy. "There exists in Persian a voluminous work called Qissa-i-Amir Hamza, written by whom, cannot definitely be said. Popularly it is supposed

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1. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.III, p.971

that it was written by Faizi for Akbar --- But its authorship is otherwise ascribed to Mulla Jalal Balkhi. The romance exists in various forms and recensions, some bulky, some small in size. It is called Qissa, Dastan or Janganama of Amir Hamza. Manuscripts of the story are very rare. It was printed many years ago, I understand, in Tehran, Bombay and Lucknow, but now these editions are unobtainable. Munshi Newal Keshore's Urdu translation is available now".[1]

In the earlier period of Middle Bengali literature a Muslim poet introduced the story of Āmir Hāmjā into the language by composing a bulky poem of 80 cantos.[2] The poet said in his poem that he was following a Persian work: "The story of Āmir Hāmjā is in Persian and people are distressed because they cannot understand it. That is why I decided to adapt it in Bengali so that they can understand it".[3] This earlier writer did not name his source either.

Āmirhāmjār puthi is a curious mixture of legends and some history. It presents in typical form many of the mythological stories cultivated by Muslim poets. It narrates the glory of spiritual leaders and gives an account of their

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1. Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, New series, Vol.XXI, Calcutta, 1925, p.193. The article on the works of Āmir Hamjā was written by Khan Sahib M.A. Wali under the title 'A Bengali Book written in Persian Script'.
2. See Chapter II, p.48
3. Nabi, A. Āmirhāmjā (a manuscript of 1684) quoted in M.E.Haq's Muslim Bānlā Sāhitya. p.217

religious preachings together with descriptions of their heroism and romances. It is a large volume like other ancient epics of the East, Mahābhārat or Sāhnāmā, and is crowded by so many events that at times it is difficult to follow. There are almost innumerable characters, men, women, fairies and demons. Some of them are not alive during the time of action but they play a considerable part in the story and their spiritual presence is frequently felt. Here we shall first discuss the features of main characters and then the attitudes of the poets as reflected in the way they tell the story.

The hero of the poem is Hāmjā whose title is Āmir. He is the central figure of the long story. He is a great warrior who does not appear to age with the passage of time. In his young age he fought King Bāhrām who brandished a club weighing 40,000 pounds and shouted like a mad elephant. Hāmjā hurled him from his horse and defeated him completely. Some of his other rivals were also incredibly powerful physically. King Ālkum threw his club of 56,000 pounds at him but when it struck his shield it broke into pieces. Hāmjā struck the elephant of his rival with his club and broke its back. He shouted like thunder and fire used to come out of his mouth. He fought demons with giant trees. He killed thousands of his enemies single handed - 'ek cote chepāi māre hājāre hājār', and created rivers of blood in the field of action - 'lahu nadi bahaiyā calila dui kul'. On one occasion he fought twelve days and

nights continually without taking food - 'bāradin bāra rāt āmir hāmjāý/ laṛen kufar sāthe kichu nāhi khāý//' Not to speak of his rivals who were demons, and moved like mountains, those who were human possessed giant bodies of 270 feet. One possible source of Hāmjā's might is his dress and arms which had previously belonged to the prophets of Allah. When he prepared for action he put on the shirt ('pirhān') of the prophet Ismāil, the hat ('tāj') of the prophet Hud, the belt (komarband') of the prophet Echhāk and carried the club ('gorja') of the prophet Sām Nurmāṇ.

Hāmjā was capable of kindness and affection. He did not kill the brother of his beloved Meher Negār in spite of his bitter enmity towards him. He liberated the demons who had harassed him so much. He loved his sons and grandsons very dearly, and wept like a child when they were killed by the enemy. He became mad with grief, when his beloved wife Meher Negār was killed, and devoted himself to the service of her grave. The prophet Ibrāhim asked him not to be weak on account of a woman, but he did not heed his advice, though he was always a devoted follower of the prophets of Allah. This was the first time that he disobeyed the prophet Ibrāhim, perhaps because he valued his love more than his faith. He was a dangerous enemy to infidels but he honoured and loved them when they accepted his faith.

Hāmjā's morals and behaviour generally were conditioned by his faith. He did not accept a sweet drink from Meher Negār till she had embraced his faith. He loved her very dearly but did not seek physical union with her, nor did he touch her till they were married. He was a polygamist but did not commit adultery even when his life was in danger. When princess Āurangi of the Kingdom of Ujāni came to him in the prison house and suggested that he should commit adultery with her he said - "I would rather be killed than agree to your proposal". He was a proud and at times cruel warrior but very humble towards his religious leaders and spiritual guide. He bowed at the feet of Khoāj Khejer and took the dust of his feet. He had great respect for learning and honoured Bojar ce Meher for his learning. He was a pious man and was guarded by Allah and the saint Khoāj Khejer who helped him whenever he faced any difficulty. He is depicted as ajealous Muslim and one of the principal aims of his wars was to convert infidels to his faith. He did not think it immoral to kill the enemy who refused to accept his faith. He was a faithful follower of the ritual practices of Islam but at the same time he enjoyed good living. He drank wine frequently and enjoyed music, song and dancing. He was apassionate lover and married a number of beautiful wives. He was prepared to ignore low social status in a woman when he was attracted by her beauty. When Gostahām

arranged a party of music and wine in his honour, two slave girls were playing sweet music and Hāmjā was attracted by them - 'āsak haila dekhe sei dui āorat'.

Naoserā, the King of Madinā was the main rival of Hāmjā. He was alarmed by the fame of Hāmjā as a warrior but his enmity really began when he was informed of his daughter Meher Negār's love for him; and to the end of his life he tried to destroy Hāmjā. His two ministers, Bojarce Meher, the old, wise and faithful follower of Hāmjā, and Baktāk, the clever, cunning and bitter enemy of Hāmjā, advised him in diverse ways. He was always hesitant to take action against Hāmjā. He realised his power and sometimes he was moved by his greatness and nobleness and attempted to make peace with him. But his vanity, as a great King, his sense of family prestige and unbelief in the faith of his rival continually urged him to hostile action. Bojarce Meher advised him to be friendly with Hāmjā but Baktāk incited him to seek help from the infidel kings of different kingdoms and fight him. His personality was weak in the sense that whenever he was defeated he realised he was wrong, and blamed Baktāk for his bad advice.

Hāmjā's intimate friend and associate Ummar Ummiyā is a character of an entirely different type. He was shrewd and always helpful to his friend, but he was also a magician and possessed supernatural powers. His principal role however,

was to provide some measure of comic relief. He dressed like a jester, and frequently played the part of one. When he visited the courts of infidel Kings as Hāmjā's messenger he responded to their insults with teasing, kicks, blows, in the manner of somewhat coarse comedy. He played a comparatively small part in the story as a whole, but it was a welcome diversion from the long tale of battles and improbable deeds of violence.

The poets were more successful in the creation of minor characters. Their role is short but they are made to lighten the whole like sparks of reality in the monotonous description of miraculous wars. When Hāmjā was planning the tunnel from his house to the palace of Naoserā, in order to meet his beloved, Allah sent a group of angels to help him. They appeared before him like ordinary labourers. Their leader was Kābel Chardār, a very common name among Bengali Muslims. He stated his intention and the nature of the profession of his party: "there is no employment for us in our country, so we have come here to find work. We do earthworks, dig tunnels, ponds, prepare dams and various ground works. We do what we are ordered to do by our employers, my name is Kābel Chardār". We can meet this Kābel Chardār and his party with axe and spade in their hand ('Kuṛāl Kodāli hāte') in any village in Bengal.

Once in a grazing field Hāmjā met a shepherd boy who told him about his disappointment in love. His beloved was a beautiful daughter of Sirupāl, the Chief ('Mandal') of a village called Chirupur. Hāmjā took him to that village and gave the girl in marriage to him. The Bengali poet created the typical Bengali viallage of Chirupur and met the 'mandal' of the village, Chirupāl in the deserts of Arabia. The atmosphere, setting and characters breath an air of reality, and are a welcome change from the improbabilities of most of the story.

Hāmjā's rival kings are almost all type characters. They appear in the battlefield like roaring giants, fight vigorously, and when defeated submit to Hāmjā, accept his faith and preach Islam, perhaps more zealously than Hāmjā. Only a few of them have peculiarities of their own. Jepin, King of the city of Torāk, was treacherous. He accepted Islam when defeated but was not faithful to his creed, and struck at Hāmjā from behind with his sword. Ālkum, a tribal chief, had the courage to remain faithful to his own faith. Hāmjā asked him to accept Islam but he refused and said "I will not be a Muslim even if I lose my life".[1]

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1. Text: "jiu jāý tabu nāi mochalmān habo/"

The portrayal of the spiritual leaders also lacks reality and individual differentiation. They helped Hāmjā and his followers whene ver they faced difficulty. All of them possessed miraculous power and could do impossible things. In fact nothing was impossible to them. The prophet Ibrāhim himself converted many infidels to Islam.

The principal woman character is Meher Negār. She was shy and amiable like a Bengali woman. When her father asked her opinion about her marriage with Hāmjā she bowed her head and remained silent. She was brought to Makkā but Hāmjā did not approach her till he married her. During that time she suffered greatly on account of her separation from her lover. She expressed her mental agony to herself but concealed it from others. But she was also a warrior. She held a sword when her husband required help or to protect her own honour. She was jealous of her co-wife. In fact she could not tolerate the idea of a co-wife. When she came to know that Hāmjā had a wife and a son she rebuked him for breaking his promise to her: "When I first fell in love with you, you promised that you would not marry any other woman. Therefore association with another woman is forbidden to you. But you lied to me and now none can trust you".

The other woman characters have no individuality of their own. All of them are very beautiful and some of them

are great warriors. The daughter of the King of fairyland Tārā is one of the many wives of Hāmjā, but she is different from the other only in her contempt for her human co-wives and her anger that Hāmjā could continue to love them after marrying her.

The attitudes of the two poets in their respective parts of Āmirhāmjār puthi are identical. Both described their work of composition as a holy task. Garibullāh's introduction bore resemblances to the works of the poets of the Maṅgalkābya. He said that he composed his poem on the orders of his spiritual guide Gāji and said that whoever read his poem would go to heaven when he died, as did martyrs, and whoever heard it would destroy his enemies - "āmirer bāt jei śune ek dele/ sahid haiẏā jāẏ maoter kāle//" and "jaṅga nāmā āmirer jei jan śuṇe duṣman khārāb tār haibe jāhāne//" The poet Saiẏad Hāmjā requested his readers and those who heard his poem, to bless him so that he might not face difficulty on the day of judgement - "Ye keha āmār Kabi paṛibe śunibe/ākbate bhāle haẏ ei doā dibe//". Hāmjā however, did not pay tribute to Gāji but he stated that his predecessor was favoured by him. Unlike Garibullāh he was inspired by the people who were eager to know the story of Āmirhāmjā and not by any spiritual guide. Hāmjā had deep feeling for the hero in his poem - Āmirhāmjār puthi. Like the Bengali epic poet Michael Madhusudan Datta, who said in connection with the death of the hero of his poem

Meghanād badh Kābya, "It cost me many a tear to kill Indrajit",[1] Saiẏad Hāmjā expressed deep emotion at the beginning of the passage in which he described the fate of his hero. "Saiẏad Hāmjā begs forgiveness of the prophet. How am I to write the martyrdom of Āmir".[2]

Both poets committed themselves without reservation or restraint to the fantastic and miraculous elements in the stories they told. At no point do they raise the question of improbability. They painted with every semblance of complete acceptance warriors like giants of unbelievable size, fairies, angels, and a variety of demons. A fairy girl gave birth to a horse; the giant bird Chimorg carried Hāmjā down from the summit of a mountain to the earth below; one of Hāmjā's wives conceived without intercourse, merely through the miraculous power of Hāmjāls turban; Hāmjā could become invisible whenever he put on a certain cap; the shoe, which the prophet gave him, made it possible for him to jump any distance or upt to any height; and the whole future was known to the sage Bojarce Meher. This is fairy tale stuff, but there is no apparent embarrassment that it has to be mingled with other material of historical quality or religious significance.

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1. Letter to a friend by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, quoted in 'Kabi Srī Madhusudan' by M.L.Majumdār, Howra, 1947, p.90
2. ("saiad hamja kahe panā rachuler/ Ki rupe likhiba ami sahid āmirer//")

Both Fakir Garibullāh and Saiẏad Hāmjā being Muslims identified themselves entirely with all the deeds performed by the hero in the name of Islam. They spoke of what he did with sympathy and approved and referred to his enemies as Kāfer (infidel), Kamjāt (low-born), lānati (cursed by Allah), hārāmjāt (bastard) etc., all terms of contempt for people who do not believe in Hāmjā's faith. When any defeated foe refused conversion Hāmjā slew him, and the poets commented that he would go to hell where fire would burn him. Religious faith was presented as the highest of all considerations. Even acts of parricide committed in its name, as for instance when the princess Johrā and the horse Āskar killed their fathers because in the one case he would not acc ept Islam, or because in the other he was plotting aginst its hero, carried no disapproval. The hero's main objective throughout the poem was shown by both poets to be the destruction of idols and idolaters and the conversion of infidels to Islam: "Yatek mūrati chila debmūrti turila muchalmān Bāmane kariẏā/" They endowed him also with two other characteristics, a passion for beauty and the satisfaction of physical desire. In the course of his campaigns Hāmjā married many wives, as did his adherents. Women were considered to be a form of chattel, and when a place was plundered they were taken over as part of its wealth.

In handling their historical material the poets are involved in anachronism. Hāmjā preached, and made converts

to, Islam long before the birth of Mahammad. Indeed, as has been pointed out earlier, he was initially hostile to the prophet and became attached to him only some few years after the first revelation. One takes note here of the discrepancy in the length of the hero's life: the historical Hāmjā died at the age of 57 to 59,[1] but in the poem he lived for 198 years. The faith he propagated is said by Saiẏad Hāmjā in two places[2] in the poem to have been received from the prophet Ibrāhim, though it is invariably referred to as Islam. A similar anachronism has been observed in the poem Iuchaf-Jelekhā by Fakir Garibullāh.

In the course of the poem some light is thrown on the attitude of Hindus to Muslims. The infidels regularly refer to Hāmjā as turuk and nere, the former being an unexceptionable term based on his place of origin, but the latter which means bald-headed is a term of abuse, earlier applied by Hindus to Buddhist monks and nuns (neṛā, neṛī), but later used for Muslims. This term was current after the lives of the two poets. It appears in some of the novels of Bankim Chandra Chatterji who wrote in the second half of the 19th century, and the contexts in which he used it leave no doubt of its abusive implications.

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1. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.II, p.255
2. Amirhāmjar puthi, pp.93 and 120

Fate is regarded as being determined by Allah. Hāmjā's life was safe until the pre-determined hour of his death arrived with the loss of his horse's shoe. Destiny is irrevocable because it is fixed by Allah having regard to man's actions. As a man sows so he will reap. Both poets are orthodox in their attitude towards fate, which is described by Garibullāh in the following words: "As you sow, so you reap. He who does evil can not expect good return (from his deed). Who has heard that a wood apple tree produces mango fruit. As you sow, so you reap".[1] The poets taught that human pride is the main cause of man's suffering and that one should be humble to Allah. Even the prophet of Allah cannot escape disaster when he expressed his pride. The poet Hāmjā stated that the cause of Hāmjā's death at the hand of a woman and the injury suffered by Mahammad was pride.

In this poem as in Iuchaf-Jelekhā the role of Allah is significant. He is no lofty spectator of man's doings on earth. He rendered important assistance to Hāmjā in his campaigns. He sent his agents, usually angels, to help him whenever he was in need. The digging of the tunnel whereby Hāmjā was able to penetrate into the chamber of his beloved

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1. ("jei jāhā rope gāch seikal kale/ badi kaile neki nāhi haý kona kāle// kebā kabe śuniýāche bel gāche ām/ jei jāhā kare tāhā pāý parinām//")

is one example, but there are many others. Allah was also quick to punish any error, particularly the sin of omitting to mention his name at the beginning of any enterprise. Hāmjā was obliged to spend 18 years instead of 18 days in the land of the fairies and the demons simply because he forgot to invoke the name of Allah when he was leaving his own country. The prophet himself was punished too for a similar sin of omission. The battle in which Hāmjā met his death was lost because Mahammad omitted to call upon Allah and boasted of the prowess of Hāmjā, which he said was sufficient to ensure victory. There seems more than a suspicion of pettiness in the incident in which Mahammad was punished by the loss of his teeth, but the sin which led up to the loss was firstly pride in his own teeth and secondly omission to regard their beauty as a gift from Allah.

The poets make comparisons with scenes and incidents from various sources. When Meher Negār met Hāmja for the first time she became attracted to him and the poet compares her condition of mind with Jelekhā - "Iuchaf lāgiẏā bibi jelekhā yeman". When Ummar Umminiẏā was teasing Landhar, he compared him with 'hanumān' (monkey) who fought against 'Rāban'. The fort of Tanjā was compared with the fort of 'Rāban' in 'lankā'.[1] There is also the influence of the story of

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1. References to 'Rāban', 'hanumān', 'lankā' are obviously from the epic 'Rāmāẏan'.

'Arabian Nights'. Like Sindbād, the sailor, Hāmjā was harassed by demons in an island who were like old men and mounted on his shoulder.

Āmirhāmjār puthi reveals, as did Iuchaf-Jelekhā, that the poets were Bengalis. Customs and festivals are frequently such as were common in Bengal. Women's toilet and the countryside are similarly Bengali; but there is on the whole less of the Bengali atmosphere here than in the earlier poem, because the drums and pipes of battle are more prominent here and take up a far larger proportion of the whole. There is far less opportunity to watch the peacock dance or listen to the song of the 'kokil'.

Chapter VI

Dobhāṣī Literature : Elegiac Poetry.

Jaṅga nāmā, Moktāl hochen

The Marsiẏā (Elegiac) theme was first introduced into Bengali literature in the 16th century, and was taken up by subsequent writers until well into the present century. The earlier and later versions on this theme are in Bengali. The only version in Dobhāṣī is that by Fakir Garibullāh in the 18th century. It carried the title Jaṅganāmā, Moktāl Hochen. Garibullāh's work gained a great popularity, and was printed many times in the 19th century.[1] The theme is part narrative and part elegiac, being based on the events which culminated in the deaths of Hāchān and Hochen and the mourning among the faithful when their deaths became known.

Janganāmā, Moktāl hochen is a long poem of some 4,700 couplets, written in the traditional paẏār and tripadī metres. The edition on which the present study is that printed and published by the Mortajābi press, Calcutta, in 1877.

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1. There are fourteen printed copies of Jaṅganāmā-Moktalhochen in the British Museum and in the India Office Library. The dates of their publication range between 1867 and 1881, and they were published in Calcutta by the different institutions. There is one manuscript of this work of Garibullah in the Dacca University library.(See Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts edited by S.S.Hussain, Dacca, 1960, p.153)

There are differences of opinion regarding the authorship of this poem. Ābdul Gafur Siddiki maintains that it was composed by Munsi Mahammad Iʃākub of 24 parganas (West Bengal) in the year 1694.[1] S.K. Chatterji followed Siddiki in his book The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language.[2] Sukumar Sen however rejected this theory and said that Iʃākub was only the scribe of the work which was composed by Fakir Garibullāh.[3] M.Shahi - dullah's opinion also confirms the theory of Sen. He remarks that the bhanitās of Iʃākub are a kind of later corruption intentionally made by the publisher who also published the name of Iʃākub as author of the poem. Once the Iʃākub theory of authorship won currency, other publishers without examining the bhanitās of the poem published the name of the author as Iʃākub.[4]

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1. Sāhitya parisat Patrikā, Calcutta, Vol.XXIII, No.II,1916, also Vol.XXIV, No.II, 1918.
2. Chatterji, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Calcutta University,1926, p.212
3. Sen,S. Bāngāla Sahityer Itihās, Vol.I, Second edition, Calcutta, 1948, pp.915-16
4. Māsik Mohāmmadi, Dacca, Kārtik, 1361 Bs. (1954 AD.)

M.E.Haq thinks differently. He says that the first part of the poem was composed by Garibullāh and the rest (major portion) was composed by Iẏākub.[1]

I have examined fourteen printed copies of Janga nāmā, Moktāl hochen in the British Museum and in the India office library, six in the British Museum and eight in the India office library. All the copies are catalogued under the authorship of Munsi Iẏākub, except one in the India office library.[2] The weight of the evidence appears to me to be in favour of Garibullāh's authorship. His bhanitā (signature couplet) occurs throughout the poem, whereas that of Iẏākub occurs only sporadically. In some editions Iẏākub's bhanitās are found only in the first part of the poem, in others in the middle part, and in others towards the end; and in none to the exclusion of Garibullāh's bhanitās, which occurs throughout the poem in all the editions I have been able to examine.

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1. Haq.M.E. Muslim Bāngla Sāhitya, Dacca, 1957,p.224
2. This copy of the poem was published in Calcutta in the year 1877. It is wrongly catalogued in the India office library. It has been Catalogued under the authorship of Shafi'al-Din. But in the title page I found the name of Kāji Safinddīn is recorded as the publisher of the poem. I compared it with other copies of the poem and found that it is the same work, composed by Garibullāh and like other copies it also contains the bhanitās of Garibullah and Iẏākub.

Moreover the language, style and manner of invocations used in Janganāmā, Moktālhochen, are markedly similar to those in other works known to have been composed by Garibullāh. Here too are similar praises of his spiritual guide, and the same processes of naturalising a foreign theme in a Bengali setting.

The poem commences with a long invocation and tributes to the author's spiritual guide, Bara Khā Gāji and three other saints, who are popular in different localities, Sāhā Sarfuddin of Ālāti, Dafar Khān of Tmbeni and Sāhsufi of Peruā. The poet says in different places in his poem that he met Gāji secretly and was instructed by him to compose the poem Janganāmā, Moktālhochen.[1]

Though the main object of the poem is to describe the battle of Kārbālā in which Imām Hochen was killed and the subsequent war initiated by his followers to avenge his death, it contains many episodes and descriptions of many battles. Here we shall state the main incidents of the poem.

One day while the prophet Mahammad was relaxing with his companions, the angel Jibnl came to him and informed him

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1. Janganāmā, Moktalhochen, Calcutta, 1877, pp.7,8,11,16, 19,21 and 29

that his beloved grand son Imām Hachām and Imām Hochen would be killed by the son of Mayabiya, one of his companions. Mayabiya was then a bachelor. When he heard this prediction he decided not to marry. But after sometime he was compelled to marry to get himself cured of some disease. In order to avoid the prediction of the angel Jibril he married an old woman who was past the age of child-bearing. But after his marriage the old woman suddenly became young, and bore him a son who was named Ejid.

In the course of time Mayabiya became the Caliph of the Muslim empire. When Ejid grew into a young man he cast his eyes upon Jaynab, a beautiful wife of Jabbār, an inhabitant of Madinā. He played a trick on Jabbār and persuaded him to divorce his wife; but after the divorce Jaynab refused to marry Ejid and married Imām Hachām, the eldest grand son of the prophet Mahammad instead. This disappointment created enmity between Ejid and Hachān. After the death of Mayabiya, Ejid became Caliph and sent his man to Madinā to kill Hachān. Ejid's man found a clever old woman called Maymunā whom he employed as a procuress. After long and persistent effort she succeeded in getting Hachān poisoned by Kad Bānu, one of his wives.

After the death of his elder brother Hochen found himself helpless in Madinā and decided to go to Kufā in the Country of Irāq where he had many followers. When he was advancing towards Kubā with his family and a small band of followers, he was surrounded by the soldiers of Ejid at Karbālā by the side of the river Forāt. Hochen and his party was not allowed to take water from the river which was the only source of water in that desert. The army of Ejid asked Hochen to surrender to them. But he refused to submit to a force sent by the despot Ejid whom he did not acknowledge as the legitimate Caliph, because he had not been elected according to the method introduced by the prophet Mahammad. Battle ensued and Hochen and his party fought heroically but in the end all the male members of the party, except a young son of Hochen, died on the battlefield.

Abu Hānifā, the step-brother of Hochen, was at the time King of the City of Ambāj. When he heard of this tragic incident he united all the followers and sympathisers of Hochen into a large army and waged a campaign against Ejid which lasted for thirty years. Eventually Hānifā defeated and killed Ejid, and went on to exact his revenge on his supporters. Jaynāl Abedin, the sole surviving son of Hochen, became Caliph of the Muslim Kingdom. Hānifā

was still engaged in a wholesale massacre when Allah decreed that he should be confined to the battlefield and surrounded by 'walls of gold and pearls'.

The story as told in Garibullāh's poem has little historical support. After the death of Āli, the fourth Caliph of Islam and father of Imām Hāchām and Hochen, Mu'āwiyah was proclaimed Caliph in 661. He gave a magnificent subsidy and pension' to Hāchān who was leading 'a life of ease and pleasure' in Medina and ''died at the age of forty-five (669), possibly poisoned because of some harem intrigue."[1]

Mu'āwiyah founded the Umaiyad dynasty and a hereditary Kingship and nominated his son Ejid as the Caliph of the dynasty. Ejid succeeded his father in April 680 and after a short rule he died in November,683.[2]

Hāchān's younger brother Hochen lived in retirement at Medina throughout the reign of Mu'āwiyah. But after his death he refused to acknowledge Ejid as Caliph and "in response to the urgent and reiterated appeals of the Irāqis, who had declared him the legitimate Caliph after

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1. Hitti,P.K. History of the Arabs, fifth edition, London, 1951, pp.189-90
2. Encyclopaedia of Islam Vol.IV, part II, London,1913, p.1162.

al-Hasan and Ali, started at the head of a weak escort of relatives, (including his harem and devoted followers) for al-Kūfah. Ubaydullāh, whose father Ziyād had been conveniently acknowledged by Mu'āwiyah as his brother, was now the Umayyad governor of Irāq and had established out posts on all the roads leading from al-Hijaz to al-Iraq. On the tenth of Muharram, A.H.61 (October,10,680) Umar, son of the distinguished general Sa'd ibn-abi-Waqqās, in command of 4000 troops, surrounded al-Hasayn with his insignificant band of some two hundred souls at Karbala, about twenty-five miles north-west of al-kufah, and upon their refusal to surrender cut them down. The grand son of the Prophet fell dead with many wounds and his head was sent to yazid in Damascus."[1]

The death of Hochen in the field of Kārbālā gave rise to Shī'ite church. "From now on the imāmship in Ali's progeny became as much of a dogma in the Shī'ite creed as that of the prophet hood of Muhammad in Islam. Yawm (the day of Karbala) gave the Shī'ah a battle-cry summed up in

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1. Hitti,P.K. Op.cit. p.190

the formula 'Vengence for al-Husayn', which ultimately proved one of the factors that undermined the Umayyad dynasty."[1]

The Shī'ahs respect both Hāchān and Hochen as great martyrs. The death of Hāchān was considered by them as a murderous act on the part of F-Mu'āwyah and they "thus made al-Hasan a sahīd (martyr), in fact the sayyid (Lord) of all martyrs."[2] In memory of Hochen they "have established the practice of annually observing the first ten days of Muharram as days of lamentation, and have developed a passion play stressing his 'heroic' struggle and suffering."[3]

Fakir Garibullāh wrote in his poem that in composing it he followed a Persian work named Moktāl Hochen,[4] but he did not give the name of the author.

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1. Hitti,P.K. op.cit. p.191
2. Hitti,P.K. Ibid, p.190
3. Hitti,P.K. Ibid, pp.190-91
4. Jaṅga nāmā, Moktālhochen, Calcutta, 1877,p.4, the poet says: "farchi Ketāb chila moktālhochen/ tāhā dekhi kabi āmi Karinu racan//"
   (There was a book in Persian called Moktāl hochen. I composed my poem following that book.)

'From its meagre historical basis as given by Tabarī and the earlier Arab historians the tragedy of Kārbālā grew by accretion in Persian literature "to the elaborate romance into which it has finally developed in the ta'ziyas and rauza-Khawāns. But the romantic element appears early, even in the narrative of Abu Miknaf Lūt ibn yahyā, who flourished in the first half of the second century of the hijra (circa A.D. 750)"[1]

In commemoration of Hāchān and Hochen's martyrdom a special type of passion play, which is known as Ta'ziya was developed. "Among the Shī'is it means in the first place the lamentation for the martyred imāms, which is held at their graves and also at home. In particular, however, it is mourning for Husain. The tabut, a copy of the tomb at Kārbālā, in popular language is also called ta'ziya. It is a model kept in the house, often very richly executed. Ta'ziya however means particularly the mystery play itself. The time for performances of it is the first third of the month of Muharram especially the 10th Rōz-i-Katl, the day of the murder of Husain--- In a wider sense the plays include the street processions such as the cavalcade with Husains horse, the marriage procession

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1. Browne, E.G. A Literary history of Persia, Vol. IV, Cambridge University, 1928, p.188

of Husain's son al-Kasim with Hasan's daughter Fatima.-- Lastly ta'ziya means the actual performance of the passion play itself.--- The commonest are Persian but they also exist in Arabic and Turkish."[1]

The Muharram Ceremony and the ta'ziya procession are popular in different places of India and Pakistan. In the Bengali speaking regions of India and Pakistan, especially in the districts of Dacca, Rajshahi, Malda, Mursidabad and Hugli, they are very popular among the urban population. The ta'ziya is built like the rath of the Hindu festival and the procession with ta'ziya might have some influence from the rath-jātrā. "It is probable that ancient rites of earlier mythological festivals like the Tamuz and Adonis cults have survived in the subsidiary plays which in India have been adapted by some Sunnīs and even Hindus.--- But the passion play itself is the popular expression of that religious feeling which has its roots in the historic fact of Karbala."[2]

The Muharram festival and ta'zia procession are mainly organised by Shīah Muslims and though Sunni Muslims

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1. Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.IV, part II, p.711
2. Ibid, " " p.712

of Bengal participate in them it is often the occasion of a Shīah-Sunni clash in different places in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. The Sunni Muslims justified the action of Ejid even at the time of his reign. They "argued that Yazid was defacto ruler and that to question his authority constituted a treason punishable with death. They insisted that the Shī'ites should not view the facts otherwise."[1] In Bengal the tragic incident of Kārbālā provokes the sympathy of the Muslims of both the Shīah and Sunni sects.

One of the most popular types of literature on this subject in the Persian language is called Rauzakhwani. It is "said to derive this name from one of the earliest and best known books of this kind, the Rawḍatu [Rauzatu]' Sh-Shuhada ('Garden of the martyrs) of Husayn waz-i-Kāshifi" who "died in 910/1504-5 A.D."[2]

One form that writings on the Kārbālā incidents took in Persian is that known as'Marthiya' or elegy. Here the emphasis is on the sadness of the death.[3] The most

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1. Hitti, P.K. op.cit. p.191.
2. Browne, E.G. ibid, pp.181-82
3. 'Marthiya' is " a poem in Arabic (and other languages following Arabic tradition) in memory of a deceased person.-- This tradition has been followed by Arabic poets from the times of paganism to the present date and the quantity of poems produced for example upon the death of the Egyptian statesman Zaglul Pāshā proves the taste for them has not abated" See The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol.III, London,1936, p.306. In Bengali Literature the tradition of 'Marthiya' is however confined to the tragic death of Hāchān and Hochen.The word 'Marthiya' has been adopted in Bengali as Marsiya.

eminent Persian poet of this school was Muhtasham of Kashani, who died in 1588 A.D. Many poets followed him and 'in a comparatively short time some fifty or sixty such poems' were produced.[1] One of the meritorious works was produced by a modern Persian poet Qa'āni who died in 1853 A.D. These poems reveal " some thing of that deep emotion which the memory of the unforgettable tragedy of Karbala never fails to rouse in the breast of even the least devout and serious-minded Persian".[2]

We have seen in Chapter 2 of the present work that in Bengali literature this theme was first introduced by a Muslim poet in the sixteenth century and thereby created a new stream which was current throughout the whole middle Bengali period. It was cultivated also by many poets and writers in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The most noteworthy works are Guljāre sāhadat of Khān Bāhādur Hāmidullāh, Sahid-i-Kārbālā by Sād Āli and Ābdul Ohāb, Jange Kārbālā by Kāji Āminul Haq, and Dastāne Sahid-i-Karbālā by Ishākuddin. After the development of prose as a literary medium in Bengal in the 19th century, prose versions on the Marsiyā theme began to appear, the most popular of which is Bisād Sindhu of Mir Mosharraf Hossain

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1. Bowne, E.G. op.cit. pp.172-73
2. " " Ibid, p.177

(first published in 1884). The book is a big volume. It is a work of fiction on the theme of the tragedy of Hāchān and Hochen, and it is still very popular in East Pakistan and West Bengal. It has been published more than 40 times since its first publication. The theme was also cultivated in the early part of the present century both in prose and in verse. Works worthy of mention are Kārbālā by Ābdul Bāri, published in 1913 in verse and Emām Hāsān-O-Hosāyn by Girish Chandra Sen, published in 1911 in prose. Sen stated in the title page of his work that "it is chiefly based on the well-known and old Persian work Raojātoś Sohādā or the garden of martyrs".

Thus the sufferings and misfortunes of Hāchān and Hochen inspired a copious literature in the Persian and Bengali languages. In Bengal it even evoked the emotion of non-Muslim writers. The story of the tragedy of the Imām brothers, especially that of Hochen touched the heart of many distinguished writers of non-Islamic faith. Gibbon observed: "In a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of Hosen will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader."[1]

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1. Bury,J.B. The Decline and Fall, London, 1898, Vol.V p.391. (The author quotes Gibbon in a foot note.)

Sir Lewis Pelly commented on the tragedy of the ta'zia play in the following words: "If the success of a drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the audience before whom it is represented no play has ever surpassed the tragedy known in the Mussulman world as that of Hasan and Husain."[1]

It appears that Garibullāh was moved to compose his poem by deep and genuine emotion. In one place he expresses his feeling in the following words: " I can not describe the sufferings of the members of the family of Hochen after his death, because when I start writing my eyes become filled with tears and I cannot see."[2]

Garibullāh's Janganāmā, Moktāl hochen is a collection of stories of human sorrows, sufferings and heroism. The poet has given many accounts of battle in this poem. High imagination and exaggeration are very frequent in his descriptions of the battle of Hānifā after the death of Hochen. He painted the warriors and their fight in a manner which is not always credible. Some warriors had a body of 126 or 141 feet high but when

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1. Pelly, The Miracle play Hasan and Husain, London,1879, Vol.I Preface.
2. The poet says:-"se sabdukher kathā likhite nā pāri/het mukhe likhile āchu aise akh puri// dekhite nā pāi sāha akher pānite/ ehār Kāfane sab nā pāri likhite//"

they fought with the faithful followers of Hochen they were mowed down like grass. Hānifā, the leader of the followers of Hochen who fought against the army of Ejid to take revenge for the death of Hochen, killed his enemies so recklessly that the battlefield was flooded with blood and his horse was obliged to swim to save him from 'the ocean of blood'. The technique which produced the exaggerations already marked in Āmir hāmjār puthi, was clearly in operation in this work too.

In the battles warriors used cannons and elephants who fought with clubs held in their trunk. The time of the battle is in the last part of the seventh century before gunpowder was invented. The place of action of the poem is the middle-east where elephants were not used in battle. But the poet being a man of the 18th century, and an inhabitant of India was influenced by his environment and age while describing the battles of a distant age and region.

The influence of the nature of Bengal is obvious also in the descriptions in this poem. The poet employed similes from his own environment. The warriors cutting the enemies like banana trees, their war-cry is like thunder from the clouds, they rush upon their enemies as water flows in the rainy season and they crush them as mad elephants crush lotuses in a pond. When the elephants

of Ejid's army encircled Hānifā the poet describes it as the clouds encircling a mountain and when he fell down from his horse it was described as the fall of the moon from the sky. When the defeated soldiers fled from the battle field the poet describes them as fishes floating in the stream.

The festivals are Bengali. In the marriage ceremony dancing girls dance and sing, people throw coloured water at each other and carry sandal-paste,(candan) for decoration.

In one place in the poem, the influence of the Mahābhārat is apparent. As the clothing of Draupadī was multiplied endlessly when Durjadhan tried to take it away from her, so the clothing of Umme chālmā were increased endlessly when the soldiers of Ejid tried to take it away from her after she was captured in the battle field of Kārbālā.

The picture of the sufferings of Hochen and his companions in the desert of Kārbālā is presented with emotion and sincere sympathy. The sufferings of thirsty men, women and children in Kārbālā in particular touch the heart of the reader. The imagery at times is very beautiful. When Hochen fell down in the battle field of Kārbālā and raised his blood-stained hand to pray to Allah,

the blood flowed from his hand into the sky and where it became a red cloud on the horizon. So the red cloud at the time of the sun-set became associated with the blood of Hochen.[1] When Hochen was beheaded by a soldier of the army of Ejid, the throne of Allah, all heaven and hell trembled as did the sky, the earth, the mountains, the gardens, and the field of Kārbālā. All the beasts, birds and animals wept, and children and animal cubs refused to drink milk from their mother's breast and bees stopped their humming.[2]

It is interesting to observe how Bengali many of the characters in this poem become, a feature which was previously noted in the other works of Fakir Garibullāh. Even the prophet himself, his daughter Fātimā and her

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1. Text:- " lahu bharā dui hāt emām ucā Kare / emāmer lahu gela āchmān upare // āchmān upare lahn chitkiẏa lāgila /sinduriẏa megh haẏe āchmāne rahila // ājitak sei megh Uthe ye āchmāne /hoohener sahider lahu jāna sarbajane //
2. Text:- " āraṣ koras laoha sakal sahite / behesta dojakh ādi lāgila Kapite // achmān jamin ādi pahar bāgān/ Kapiẏa asthir haila Kārbālā maẏdān// āftāb mahtāb tārā Kālā haiẏa gela/jānoār harim pākhi Kāndite lāgila//bālak sakal māẏer dugdha haite/nā ommed rahe sabe imām sogete/ bāg bhālu Kānde ār mahiṣ gandār/ baccā Ke nā deẏ dudh Kānde jāre jār/ gāi nāhi dud deẏ imām lagiẏa/ bachur nā Khāẏ kichu dele sog pāiẏa // maumāchi bhomrā Kānde mukhe nāi mau/

husband Āli, and other leaders of Islam, would on many occasions not have seemed out of place in a Bengali household. This is especially true of Fātimā, who in many places is very much of the soil from which the author sprung. One remembers how jealous she was of her stepson, and how she berated her father when he showed affection for him. This is a very natural and homely scene; and there are others.

In the same way too Garibullāh could not refrain from allowing the supernatural powers from playing their part in the development of the story. The angels Jibril and Ajrāil were very busy. After the death of Hochen the angels arranged a Jānājā, a ritual prayer for the dead, on the battle field. The ceremony was attended in person by all the prophets from Adam to Mahammad, together with Hochen's dead parents and many other relatives who likewise were deceased. More than once during the course of events Mahammad appeared to advise the faithful; and when at one stage Hānifā lost an arm, Mahammad told him how it could be restored to him. The garb of the prophet on these occasions was that of a traditional fakir. He wore wooden sandals (Kharam) and a long scarf (jubbā) and carried a stick (āsā) in his hand.[1] Such pictures

1. Text: " tabe rātre rachul nekjāt/kharam dukhāni pāy āsā liya hāt//galāy hajer jubbā ghire pare gāy/hānifār chirāne basi sapan dekhāy//

naturally raise the question of orthodoxy, for it is considered by many that it is a sin to write or paint or even imagine any such image of the prophet or of his companions.

Garibullāh's poem has serious artistic defects, but in spite of them he achieved a liveliness of action and evoked the imagination and sympathy of his readers to such an extent that his work became very popular. This is evident from the number of editions of his poem which were published; and it should be remembered that his was the only work on the theme to be written in Dohhāṣī, and that a number of later writers were prompted to take up the same subject. His poem is widely read and listened to today, especially by Muslims, who celebrate the martyrdom of Hāchān and Hochen with much emotion and enthusiasm every year.

CHAPTER VII

Dobhāṣī literature - Didactic poetry.

It has been noted that Muslim poets introduced into Bengali literature a new stream which has been called Instructive or Didactic poetry.[1] The number of such poems is very large. In the classification of Long's catalogue of Dobhāṣī literature in Chapter IV, it has been seen that out of a total of 41 principal works, 17 belong to this categroy. Of the 290 Dobhāṣī works available in the U.K., 148 are Didactic.

Bedārelgāfelin.

This type of composition consists ~~Soley~~ solely of Islamic teaching on moral, social and religious subjects generally. It was addressed by Muslims to Muslims, and it is not therefore surprising that little is known of it outside the community for whom it was and is intended. The contents of the numerous poems in this category are more or less stereotyped. There is little scope for originality of presentation; and from the point of view of style there is little to choose between one work and another. For this reason it is necessary only to examine a single work. The one chosenis Bedārelgāfelin by

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1. See Chapter II, p.59

Sekh Munsi Chamiraddin. It has been chosenbecause of its great popularity within the Muslim community of Bengal.[1] The edition on which the following synopsis is based is that printed and published by the Āhmadi Press of Calcutta in the Bengali year 1255 (1848 A.D.). It cons ists of approximately 2,600 couplets, and like the works examined above is written entirely in the Bengali payar and tripadī metres.

Bedārelgāfelin contains some autobiographical references, from which the following facts emerge. Chamiraddin was an inhabitant of the village Bāman pāṛā in the Bāliyā parganā in the district of Hugli. His father whose name was Mahammad Ākel was a pious man. In the course of composition the poet said that he had lost both his father and mother. He did not however, mention the date of their demise. His spiritual master, Khondkār Erjātulla, , was also an inhabitant of the poet's village. The poet received help from Munsi Mahammad Pānā, Maniraddi, Sekh Jitu, Bhitu and Bhikhu in the printing of his work. No date of composition is mentioned in the poem,

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1. There are eight copies of Bedārelgāfelin in the Cambridge University Library, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, British Museum and India Office Library. The dates of publication of these copies range between 1848 and 1880 and all were published in Calcutta by different institutions.

nor is any incident in his life dated. It is difficult therefore to ascertain the date. The earliest publication, so far as we can trace, is that of 1848 A.D. Long mentions this book in his catalogue in 1855. The poet says that he published his poem in Calcutta. Since commercial publication was not established in Calcutta until the 19th century, it may be assumed that the work was composed in the early part of the 19th century and certainly before 1848.

Bedārelgāfelin presents the whole range of the Islamic teaching and practice which was considered necessary for the guidance of the Muslims of Bengal. It expatiates on the being and the worship of Allah, describes the life and teachings of the prophe t Mahammad and the nature and activity of Iblich, the embodiment of evil known also as Satan. It lays down a code for human behaviour, both personal and social, together with an account of rewards and punishments, together with a description of heaven and hell. There are hundreds of rules concerning moral behaviour and ritual observances. It can most simply be analysed under four heads, as follows:

(a) Doctrine: the being of Allah; the life and teachings of Mahammad and other religious leaders; the activity of Satan; the description of heaven and hell; and the definition of religious terms in common use.

(b) Ritual: daily observations, together with particular and occasional onservances, both private and corporate.

(c) Moral duties: these include duties required of one Muslim in his dealings with another; the duties of man to man., of man to woman, marriage, divorce, adultery etc.; the duties of parents to children and vice versa; and the rules which control the relations of Muslims towards people of other creeds.

(d) Heterodox practices: i.e., the religious, moral and social beliefs and practices which the author considers to be un-Islamic and therefore irreligious. This section of the poem has considerable sociological importance, as most of the heterodox practices listed can be ascribed to the influence of Hinduism on the day to day life of the Muslims in Bengal.

Doctrine.

First, Allah, whom all should praise. He alone is to be worshipped. He is the lord and creator of the Universe and of all the creatures in it. He holds knowledge of past, present and future. He has neither form nor colour, and may not therefore be represented by any image. He is incomparable and all-pervading; invisible but all-seeing. He hears all who call upon him or mention His name. He provides livelihood (rejek) for all living beings. He can bestow life at will,

or end it. He is above sin. He is the supreme judge. He can punish or reward. His qualities are beyond number and none can describe them fully.

It was Allah who first created Mahmmad from his own light (nūr); and from the nūr of Mahammad he created all living beings. He created the fourteen worlds (caudā bhuban) for Mahammad. Allah himself describes the glories of Mahammad in the Koran, in the verse known as Iẏāchin (Iẏāchin churāẏ).

On the day of judgement Allah will judge the actions of all men, bestowing heaven on the pious and hell on the sinner. The man who worships any god other then Allah or believes in any supernatural power other than him is an infidel and will be consigned to the fires of Hell.

Mahammad is the beloved of Allah. There would have been no sky, no earth, no creation if he had not been created. He is so noble that Allah himself describes his qualities in the Koran. The Koran was preserved in the seat of Allah (āras). It was delivered to Mahammad gradually over a period of 23 years. Mahammad was alone when he started preaching Islam. He slowly gained ground and gathered followers. He fought against infidels. The poet gives a short sketch of Mahammad's life. He lost his father before his birth and his mother died when he was only six years old. He received the order to preach religion (nabuat) from Allah at the age of forty. He married fourteen wives and had three sons and four daughters. He lived

in Madīnā for the last ten years of his life and died at the age of sixty three. He was very kind and affectionate. He gives affection (didār) to his followers and pleads for them to Allah on the day of judgement.

Mahammad's chief associates (sāhābā) are four in number: Ābu Bakar, Omar, Osmān and Āli, The latter two were his sons-in-law. It was Osmān who compiled the Koran. Mahammad's daughter Fātimā had two sons Hāchān and Hochen. Hochen died in the field of Kārbālā and became a great martyr of Islam.

Iblich (satan) was in the beginning a great and learned teacher of the angels (ferestā); but when he refused to bow down before Ādam, the first man created by Allah, he was cursed by Allah and became Satan, the embodiment of evil. He is portrayed as a cheat and a thief. It was he who incited Kābil, the elder son of Ādam, to murder his younger brotherHābil. It is not wealth that he steals but the religious faith of men and women. He sits at the centre of the human heart, where he creates uncertainty and doubt and seduces man to sin. Unbelief is Satan's work, for by turning men into infidels he is able to ensure their final consignment to hell. He does not work alone however. His associates are depitted as being even meaner and more treacherous then he is. They are false teachers, priests, who do not themselves follow the true path of Islam and encourage men to observe un-Islamic practices. The poet writes that the army of Satan is made up of the ignorant

for ignorance like false knowledge is the fruit of sin. The poet perhaps indicates the animal instinct of man as Satan when he says - "Satan does not grow in trees, he grows in all parts of life. Every one has good and bad instincts".[1]

The poet describes seven frightful hells which he calls Jāhānnam, Jahim, Chirach, Kartār, Nathi, Hotmā and Hābiýā. He also gives a description of the beauties of the heavens, but they have no name and are without number. He says that sinful Muslims will be allowed to live in heaven after the completion of the term of their stay in hell which will be determined according to the gravity of the sins committed by them in the earth. But infidels (Kāfer), polytheists (mośrek) and heretics (monāfek) are doomed to live in hell for ever.

The poet defines certain religious terms.

(a) Imān. It is faith in Islam, and involves the reading of Kalemā taiýb, i.e., the invocation which says "there is no God but Allah and Mahammad is his prophet", and which must believed Imān has seven parts: (i) the sense of shame, (ii) education, (iii) to speak the truth, (iv) to guard ones' self from the act of embezzlement, (v) to believe the Koran, the forkan, the injil and the taurit as the books of Allah, (vi) to

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1. Text: "saýtān ki gāche haý, sakali tarike haý, bhāla burā sakaler ṭhāi/"

believe in the final destruction of the Universe and the day of judgement, (vii) to believe that there are heaven and hell.

(b) Faraj: religious duties which are enforced by Allah e.g., rojā (fasting), nāmāj (ritual prayer) etc., He who neglects these duties will go to hell and he who refuses to do them will become an infidel.

(c) Oājeb: religious duties which are enforced by scriptures indirectly. He who neglects these duties will be a sinner.

(d) Sunnat: religious and moral duties and daily observances which were practised by prophet Mahammad. He who neglects them will be a sinner and will be deprived of the prophet's affection.

(e) Hālāl: food, drink, work etc., which are permitted by Allah. He who follows them will gather virtue. He who neglects them will be a sinner.

(f) Hārām: opposite to hālāl. Food, drink, work etc., which are forbidden by Allah. He who does not follow the injunction of Allah will be an infidel.

(g) Makru: food, drink, work etc., which are neither permitted nor forbidden by Allah but which were avoided by the prophet and other religious teachers. He who avoids them will gather virtue.

The poet concludes his teaching about the doctrine of Islam by presenting to the reader a series of images which

can be used as the basis for mystical and devotional exercises. The human body is likened unto a house which has been supplied with everything that it can need or desire. "First know yourself, and then you will come to know Allah",[1] Then comes the image of the ocean of Allah's love. Whoever immerses himself in the ocean of Allah will understand the divine love and be assured of eternal joy. Life however, is transient. It is as ephemeral as "a drop of water on the leaf of a lotus".[2] Another image, not unknown in other schools of thought, is that of the river of life. Man has to cross its troubled waters, and to make sure of reaching the further shore he must hold firmly to the rudder of his boat. Elsewhere the world is depicted as a market in which man has come to do business. It is set in a strange and foreign land. Man must buy and sell carefully, for he is surrounded by thieves and cheats who are on the look-out to ruin his business. He may be summoned at any moment to render an account of his transactions to Allah, so it behoves him to keep himself free from the deceitful practices of the world.

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1. "āpnāy cinile pare Āllāke cinibe/"
2. "padma pāter pāni eýchā ṭalmal kare/"

It is interesting to note also that the poet recommends the employment of a spiritual guide. To be succeasful in the spiritual life one must learn to meditate, and that is possible only with the help of a teacher.

Ritual.

The rites laid down for the faithful Muslim cover the whol range of human activity from the cradle to the grave. They relate to daily and seasonal observances, and embrace different forms of worship both individual and corporate. In no aspect of his life, however trivial or apparently mundane, is man left without some form of ritual guide. No brief summary can include all that is prescribed, but the following is sufficient to provide a picture of what the poet as teacher lays down for his readers.

Prayer (nāmāj). Muslims are required to pray five times a day (nāmāj). He who prays regularly is free from sin. Nāmāj is a shield against hell. When a Muslim bows his head in prayer all his sins heave him. The performance of nāmāj five times a day is called faraj. Nāmāj consists of a regular series of postures, including the kneeling posture, and prayers. One series is known as a rekāt. The nāmāj of the afternoon (āchar) consists of eight rekāts, which are believed to open the eight gates of the eight heavens. Night prayer consists of seven rekāts, which close the seven gates of the seven hells.

Early morning prayer consists of two rekāts which absolve a man from all sins committed during the previous twenty-four hours. The poet explains that when a man comes to cross the bridge which is placed between heaven and hell, (polserāt) on the day of judgement the regular nāmāj, he has performed will stand on the bridge like a torch, for without light no one can cross. He also uses another image to enforce his point. The day of judgement is depicted as a day of great heat and regular nāmāj which a man has performed will be to him like a sunshade.

Corporate prayer is considered more efficacious than individual prayer. To perform nāmāj in jāmāt (an assembly of worshippers) is considered to be 27 times more efficacious than to pray alone. To lead nāmāj in jāmāt an imām (prayer-leader) is required. He must be a pious man in whom his fellow Muslims have confidence. This section concludes with a stern warning. A Muslim who neglects nāmāj will be severely punished. The omission of one of the five daily prayers carries as its punishment confinement in hell for 80 hokbā, one hokbā being equal to 80 years.

Weekly prayer is also enjoined. The weekly nāmāj (jummā) is to be performed in jāmāt at noon every Friday, and in a mosque. There are also important annual festivals, idulfetar and iduljohā, during which nāmāj is performed in jāmāt under the leadership of an imām. There are also special performances of namāj at times of solar eclipse (Kaśuf), and lunar eclipse

(Khaśuf). The former is performed in jāmāt, the latter alone. At times of serious drought there is a special nāmāj in jāmāt, called echtechkā, in the earnest expectation that Allah will send rain. This nāmāj has to be performed on three consecutive days and in an open field. It is held to be efficacious unless there is an infidel in the praying company. The name jānājā is given to the nāmāj which is performed in jāmāt before committing a dead body to the ground in burial.

Fasting (rojā): In the Arabic month of Ramjān Muslims must observe fasting (rojā) for the whole lunar month. The month of Ramjān is holy. The Koran began to be committed to Mahammad in this month. On the 20th day of this month the book of Allah jabbur was committed to the prophet Dāud, on the 21st day the prophet Cholemān was born on the 22nd day the prophet Muchā was born; on the 23rd day prophet Ichā was born; on the 24th day Allah met Muchā in the mountain called Kohtur; on the 25th day Muchā crossed the river Nile with his followers and Ferāun (the King of Egypt) with his army sank and died in that river; on the 26th day Allah showed his light to Muchā; on the 27th day Allah sent the prophet Iuchaf in the stomach of a fish. In one of the days of the last part of the month of Ramjān, angels bring Allah's blessings to his creatures in the earth and on one of the nights of that period all the

objects of the world, animate and inanimate, bow down to Allah. In this month angels put Satan into chains so that he cannot mislead the Muslims who observe roiā. It is a great virtue to give food and drink to a Muslim who observes roiā.

The period of roiā ends with a great festival called Idul fetar. It is observed on the 1st day of the month of chāoāl, the Arabic month after ramiān. On that day the head of the family must distribute food among the poor at the rate of one seer (two pounds) of wheat or flour or the price of it per head of the members of his family.

The second great festival of the year is called Idulioha. It is observed in the Arabic month of ielhai. Muslims should offer cows, buffaloes, camels, goats or sheep on that day. The animal for the offering should not be old or sick.

Sabebarāt is an annual night of festival. It occurs on the 15th of the Arabic month of sābān. This is a very holy night and Muslims should pray nāmāj and read the Koran for the whole night if possible. They should give food and alms to the poor and orphans and pay respect to their teachers and learned persons and should visit sick neighbours.

Āśurā is a holy day. It is on the 10th of the Arabic month of Mahram. On this day Hochen, the grandson of the prophet Mahammad was killed in the field of Kārbālā. It is

a great virtue to observe roiā on the day of āśurā. On this day Muslims should pay respect to their parents, teachers and superiors. If there are any conflicts or quarrel between Muslims they should try to reach agreement on this holy day.

The month of mahram (an Arabic month) is a holy month. Allah bestowed nabuat (the authority to preach the religion of Allah) on ten thousand prophets in this month. Muslims should practise abstinence in this month, especially during the first ten days of the month.

When a child is born to a Muslim he should give an animal offering (ākikā). This should be observed either on the 7th, 14th or 21st day after birth. Ākikā should be given at the rate of one goat or sheep for a daughter and two for a son. On the day of ākikā, the head of the child should be shaved, and the hair should be weighed against gold or silver and the value of it should be distributed among the poor. On the day of ākikā a feast must be given to relatives, teachers and pious people with the meat of the animal offered as ākikā. When the child learns to speak teach him to say kalemā taiyb.

The practice of ritual charity is associated with certain major festivals and involves prayer and some form of fasting or abstinence. The Muslims who possess at least 7½ tolā[1] of gold or 52½ tolā of silver should pay a tax called

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1. Tolā is a measurement for weight. One tolā is less than half an ounce.

jākāt at the rate of 2½% of his total wealth. The woman who possesses ornamanets and does not give jākāt will be thrown into hell and her ornaments will turn to serpents and will bite her. The Muslims who possess live-stock should also give jākāt at the rate of one cow or buffalo for every 30 and one sheep or goat for every 40. Jākāt should be distributed among the poor, either relatives or neighbours. To give jākāt is farai, i.e., compulsory for Muslims.

Muslims should begin their meal by saying bismillā (with the name of Allah) and after finishing their food they should say ālhāmdolillāh (all praise to Allah.)

Moral Duties.

The duties imposed on the pious by their religion are set forth as series of commandments. The series can be separated as follows: the duty of man to man; fodd and drink; parents and children; respect for the teacher; man and wife; neighbours, being Muslims; neighbours, being ifidels. The different categories can be seen as different, though there is some overlapping, and occasionally some repetition.

Do not lie. A liar will be changed to a pig on the day of judgement and cast into hell. He will never receive the blessings of Allah or the favour of the prophet or saint.

Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not commit oppression. Do not envy. He who envies is a sinner and will go to hell. Live at peace with your neighbours. Respect your parents,

teachers, learned men and pious men. Give charity to the poor and to orphans, and treat them with kindness. Do not slander (gibat).[1] He who commits gibat will lose the love of the prophet Mahammad, and the merit he has won will go to the victim of his gibat. It is a great sin to make a parade of wealth or to boast of it. The woman who boasts of her jewellery and makes a parade of it before her neighbours is a sinner. Give food to the hungry and clothes to the naked. Speak justly and listen only to that which is good. Forget the good you have done and remember only the evil. Think of yourself as a sinner and of your neighbour as a good man. Be meek and address others with kindness. Wherever there is suffering relieve it. The rich should not hesitate to pray in jāmāt with the poor. If he avoids doing so he will go to hell. He who respects the poor and the pious respects Allah, but he who hates them hates Allah too.

Seek after knowledge. Ignorant men (jāhel) are like sheep. They follow the practices of their forefathers, and speak without understanding. The prophet says that there are six categories of men who will certainly go to hell: the King who oppresses his subjects, the man who steals from another, the man who boasts of his ownwealth or power, the man who is proud of his ignorance, the teacher who leads men astray, the bogus mendicant.

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1. The poet explains the term gibat in the following words: He who cannot speak ill in the presence of a person but speaks ill behind is called gibat."("sumukhe kahite nāre piche burā bale/ tāhāk gibat kahe janibe sakale//")

Do not eat pork. Do not drink wine. Do not commit adultery. Do not lend money on usury or involve yourself in business which rests on usury. Practice patience: it is a great virtue. When you are happy, be grateful to Allah; when you are in distress endure it with patience and pray to Allah for his help.

Obey your parents, unless they order you to transgress your religion. If they observe irreligious practices or behave like infidels try to convince them of the truth of Islam respectfully and with courtesy. If they do not follow the path of Islam do not abuse them or treat them with disrespect but rather keep yourself aloof from them. You should not speak to them harshly and should never be angry with them. Always try to help them in every possible way. Give them food and clothes if they need them.

Always respect your teacher, even if he happens to be your teacher for only one week. Salute him whenever you meet him. Talk to him courteously. Do not take your seat before your teacher sits down. Try to help him if he at any time needs your help. Always remain grateful to him because he gave you the light by which you know things, whether they are good or bad.

Give your children good and religious names. Circumcise your male children. Give them good, especially religious, education. It is your sacred duty to give them education.

If you fail to give them education you will be held responsible for the sins they will commit out of ignorance. When they are adult give them in marriage to good and religious persons.

Keep your wife in peace and comfort. You should teach her religious, moral and social duties and obligations. If she refuses to learn or to follow them try patiently to convince her. But if she still does not follow good teachings stop talking with her and sleep in a separate bed. If then she does not change her ways beat her, but do not inflict any injury. If after all these measures she remains unchanged then divoce her. You should be kind and considerate to her. If you cannot live with her in peace through her fault, do not insult or torture her rather divorce her. It is better to have one wife but if you marry more than one you must do equal justice to them all. If one wife is poor and another wife is rich you should respect and love both equally and not hate or insult the poor one and respect and love the rich one. You should not abuse your wife or her parents or her relatives. You should respect her parents. If you go away from your home bring some gift and souvenir for her when you return home.

Remember that your husband is your master. Try to give him satisfaction and pleasure, both physical and mental. You should not lend anything (money or domestic articles) to any

person without the permission of your husband. You should not observe optional fasting (roiā) without his permission. You should not disclose his weakness to others. You should not press him for money beyond the basic needs of the family. You should be happy at the happiness of your husband and sorry at his sorrows. You should not insult or rebuke him. You should beautify yourself so that your husband can find pleasure in you. You should not curse your children.

Duty to Muslim neighbours.

You should visit your neighbours as frequently as possible. You should be with them in their happiness and sorrows. If they ask help from you, you should try your best to help them. If any one is ill you should go to see him frequently and help him in every possible way. If any one is away from his home leaving behind his family at home you should take care of them and protect their lives and property if they are in danger. You should not quarrel with them.

Duty to infidel neighbours.

Always try to do good to them. Do not do any harm to them or to their property. Do not insult them. Muslims are nowadays mixing with the Hindus and some are addressing them as father or brother. This is wrong. You must be conscious that your religion, custom and manners are very different from those of the Hindus. But at the same time live with them harmoniously. If any body oppresses them you should try to help them in all possible ways.

The poet writes in terms of serious condemnation of certain practices which were prevalent in the Muslim community, most of which had been taken over at one time or other from Hinduism. He calls such practices un-Islamic. The list he gives shows the extent to which certain Muslims had moved from the orthodox position in respect of both their worship and social procedures and organisation.

Muslims worship at the graves of holy men, offering sweets and lighting candles. They observe the harvest rite known as nabānna. On certain festival occasions they put clay pitchers (ghaṭ) and fly flags at the doors of their houses. They observe the last day of the Bengali month of pauṣ (pauṣ saṅkrānti). They take part with Hindus in the celebration of the Holi and Diẏāli festivals, and join in the pujās known as bhāifoṭā and garuparab (cow festival). They worship satyapīr, the snake goddess manasā and the pox goddess sitalā to whom they pray for relief from disease or other misfortune and for the fulfilment of their desires. They burn clay lamps in their houses in the evening and invoke kalemā. They even go so far as to beg blessings from Brahmins, plaster their floors with cowdung and discard earthenware pots whenever death or birth occurs in their houses.

Muslims had apparently also taken over many superstitions current among Hindus. They consider it an ill omen to see an empty pitcher, to hear a sneeze, or to hear someone call

from behind at the time of departure from home. They refuse to give their neighbours cowdung from their sheds in the early morning for fear it will harm their own live-stock. They will not give or accept loans on the Lakṣmībār, the day of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth, because there is a superstition to the effect that to do so would displease the goddess and result in financial loss. This list of borrowed superstitions are followed by a short homily on the subject. Muslims are required to believe that Allah is the Master of Life, death, livelihood, wealth and property. He alone can bring good or evil to man. It is utterly against the teachings of Islam to believe that there is any other divine power, god or goddess or saint, who has control of good or evil. Anyone who believes in any other divine power will surely go to hell.

Certain aspects of behaviour and social practice have clearly been influenced by the caste system as it is operated by the Hindus. Some Muslims, says the poet, claim to be aristocratic by virtue of their birth. They claim upper class status. They call themselves āśrāf and despise those of so-called lowly birth whom they refer to as ātrāf. There is no caste system in orthodox Islam, and those who call themselves āśrāf are irreligious and guilty of betraying their faith. Many Muslims show a regard for their ancestors that is tantamount to ancester-worship. They refuse the right of a widow to re-marry, and when it is suggested to them that there

is nothing in Islamic doctrine to prevent a widow from re-marrying, they lapse into a sort of bastard Urdu known as Khoṭṭā.[1] It is utterly cruel, says the poet, and against their religion to deny widows this right, which has been sanctioned by Allah and was practised at the time of Mahammad who himself married widows and gave his own widowed daughters in marriage. His grand-daughter Umme Kulcham married four times. The poet ends with a strong denunciation: "The practice of caste is utterly false. It is a man's character which is important. He who follows in the steps of the prophet is a true Muslim".[2]

Other practices also call for condemnation. It often happens that during a marriage ceremony the bridgegroom sits among his relatives with the bride on his knee, and the two of them eat milk and rice together, while the women-folk sing vulgar songs. This practice is beimān (contrary to the faith.) Allah has laid down that a sense of shame is part

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1. The poet describes the language and attitude of 'āśrāfs' in the following words. "If anyone speaks to them on the subject they reply in the 'Khoṭṭā' language and say 'we are of a high born caste, there is no such custom among us, if we are low caste people we should give our widows in marriage, but high caste people do not behave in this way".
('Kaile Kaý Khoṭyā bāt, hāmchab āśrāf jāṭ, merāchabkā nehi eýchā cāl/ kamjāt kaminā hogā, beoýājankā nekā degā, āśrāfokā nehi eýchā hāl//")
2. Text: "jāt pāt sab jhutā āsal tārik/ je cale nabir mate sei jāti ṭhik//"

of the true faith. Muslims also drink country-made liquors, eat opium and smoke hemp, whereas they ought to know that all forms of intoxication are forbidden (hārām). They also gamble, at cards and with dice. They shave their beards and grow the hair of their head long. If anyone tells them that it is wrong to smoke tobacco (hokkā), they quote Persian verses in support of smoking. They desecreate the festival of Mahram by riotous reading of the marśiyā poems on the death of the martyrs and by joining in unseemly processions, dancing and beating drums, during the performance of the memorial obsequies. Mahram is a sad occasion for all true Muslims, but they mark the occasion by banquets and riotous living. The sad thing is that many so-called religious teachers also participate in these unseemly frivolities.

Chapter - VIII

Critical comments on Dobhāṣī Diction and Literature

Though writing in Dobhāṣī is without question part of Bengali literature, no exhaustive critical study of it has yet been made. Historians of literature and other critics have from time to time made reference to Dobhāṣī literature but none has given his full attention to it. All we have are a few passing comments inserted into general reviews which are principally concerned with other aspects of the literature. In this chapter it is proposed to set forth the comments so far made on Dobhāṣī literature by the scholars who have referred to it.

Dobhāṣī diction and works in it were first brought to public notice by an English scholar, the Rev. J.Long, as early as 1855. He named it 'Musalman Bengali literature.' In his work A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works he observed: "The Musalmans have always been noted for the tenacity with which they have clung to their own ideas and language, and for the obstinacy with which they have resisted foreign influence. The Persian, their great prop, has been shorn of its honours in India, and the Musalmans are averse to learn the Vernaculars; hence, as the Urdu has been formed by a mixture of Persian and Hindi, so the Musalmans have

formed in Bengal a kind of lingua franca, a mixture of Bengali and Urdu, called the boatman's language. This must eventually give way to the overwhelming influence of the Bengali but in the meantime, as illustrative of the phases of mind of the people, is appended a list of the principal books in this dialect, printed at Musulman presses in Calcutta, which have a wide circulation and particularly among boatmen and the Musalman population of Dacca. They are cheifly translations from the Persian or Urdu."

W.W.Hunter in his book Indian Musalman, published in Calcutta in 1871 wrote the following while explaining the influence of Islam in lower Bengal: "To this day the peasantry of the delta is Muhammedan. So firmly did Islam take hold of lower Bengal, that it has developed a religious literature and a popular dialect of its own. The patois known as Musalman Bengali is as distinct from the Urdu of upper India, as the Urdu of North India is different from the Persian of Herat." [1]

Abdul Gafur Siddiki read a paper on the contributions of Muslims to Bengali literature in the 9th session of the "Bangiya sahitya sammelan." It was published in Sahitya

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1. Hunter, W.W. Indian Musalman. Calcutta, 1871, p.152

parisat patrikā, Vol. XXIII No. II in 1916. In this article he estimated that 8325 works had been composed by different poets in Dobhāṣī diction, and that 4446 works were still current. He also claimed that Dobhāṣī was the real Bengali and he accused Hindu scholars of eradicating Arabic, Persian and Urdu vocabulary elements, from the Bengali language, and substituting difficult Sanskrit words in their place. In the course of his observations on Dobhāṣī literature, which he called baṭṭālār puthi, he strongly condemned the suggestion that the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal was Urdu and not Bengali. It appears from his article that there was a strong controversy on the question of the vernacular of Bengali Muslims in his time, and that a section of the Muslim community of Bengal was propagating the idea that the vernacular of the Muslims in Bengal was Urdu, and that Bengali was the vernacular of Hindus only.

Āhsan Ullāh published a booklet called Baṅga bhāsā O Musalmān Sāhitya i.e. Bengali language and Muslim literature, in Calcutta in 1918. He read it to the conference of "Yaśohar - Khulnā - Siddikiẏā Sāhitya Samiti." He observes: "The baṭṭalā press disseminated many Musalmān puthi in the early part of the 18th Century. The most noteworthy of these were āmirhāmjā, lāẏlāmajun, sonābhān, iẏchafjolekhā, kāchāchol-

āmbiẏā etc. One notes the use of Arabic and Persian words in these books in large quantities. They are neglected by the Hindu Community because the language in which they were written was hardly influenced by Sanskrit. Nevertheless the puthis put out by battalā press undoubtedly form part of the Corpus of Bengali literature."[1]

Islām darśan was one of the most influential monthly journals in Bengal during the early part of the 20th Century. It was run by Muslim writers and social workers. The editor of the journal, Mahammed Abdul Hākim was an able writer. He wrote a long article on the contributions of the Muslims to Bengali literature in "Islām darśan" in 1921. The title of the article was "Baṅga Sāhitye Musalmān."[2] In the last part of the article he discussed the growth and importance of Dobhāṣī literature under the sub-title "islāmī bāṅglā bā pũthi sāhitya." According to Hākim islāmī bāṅglā was developed by Muslim writers as a rival language to the Sanskritised language of the Hindu pandits

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1. Ullah, A. Banga bhāṣā O Musalmān Sāhitya, Calcutta, 1918, p.3.

2. The article was continued in Islām darśan in the Vol.I, No.9, 11 and 12, Calcutta, 1921.

who flourished before the establishment of the present day 'lucid' style was founded by the persistent efforts of Bidyā Sāgar, Bankim, Michael and Hemchandra. Hākim wrote his article in the 'lucid' style. He said also that he had written four poetical works in islāmī bāṅglā. [1] He praised the literary qualities of some of the Dobhāṣī works and expressed the opinion that they are the national literature of the Muslims of Bengal and urged his readers to gather inspiration from them. He praised the style of Bidyā Sāgar, Bankim and Michael as being the standard literary style, but he strongly condemned those Hindu writers who jealously excluded Perso-Arabic words, and imported difficult and unfamiliar Sanskrit words into the language.

Dinesh Chandra Sen also supported the use of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements on many occasions and strongly condemned the Hindu writers who avoided them "as an orthodox

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1. The following two works of Hākim available in the India office library. (a) Eske goljār was composed in 1909 and was published in Calcutta in 1913. This is a large work in 3 volumes on the romance of a prince of Delhi. In a preface the author says that he composed the work to improve the style of Dobhāṣī diction and the literature in it. (b) Eskejahar was composed in 1913 and was published in the same year from Calcutta. The language of both the works is not Dobhāṣī. It is standard Bengali with some Perso-Arabic which are employed with conscious effort.

Brahmin avoids the touch of a Muhammadan."[1] His comments on Dobhāṣī literature were however brief. In the introduction to the English edition of Eastern Bengal Ballads he observed: "The Baṭṭala works of Muhammadan writers, written in what is called the 'Musalmaṅ Bangala', are so full of Urdu words that the literature created by them has become as exclusive as the Sanskrit Bengali of the Pundits of Fort William College."[2]

Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his work The Origin and development of the Bengali language Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, examines various aspects of Dobhāṣī literature in more detail than previous scholars had done. He observes: "Within the last century has been established, in the hands of some Urdu-Knowing Maulavīs, a form of Bengali which is known as 'Musalmānī Bengali' in which a considerable literature consisting of adaptions of Moslem and Persian stories and romances and religious works and tracts has grown up.----- 'The Musalmān Bengali' employed in these works, however, is often too much Persianised; but the metres are Bengali, and a large percentage of Sanskrit words are retained, cheek by jowl with the Perso-Arabic importations.

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1. Sen, D.C. Eastern Bengal Ballads, Vol.I, part I, Calcutta University, 1923, Introduction p. Xlll
2. Ibid, p.2.LXIV

It is the Maulavī's reply to the Pandit's sādhubhāṣā of the early and middle part of the 19th century. The percentage of Persian words in a typical 'Musalmān Bengali' work--- is about 31.74. --- One of the features of 'Musalmān Bengali', which demonstrates its rather artificial character, is the frequent use of Hindōstānī words and forms --- which have no existence in the Bengali as spoken by the Musalmāns in the villages within the different dialectal areas. 'Musalmānī Bengali' thus savours of the mixed Bengali-Hindōstānī - Awadhī jargon which is heard in the bazaars of Calcutta among Mohammedan working classes, cabmen, petty traders and others, who speak Calcutta Bengali and Hindōstānī equally badly, and unlike the Mohammedan masses in the country have no proper dialect. Books in 'Musalmānī Bengali' begin from the right side, following the way of a Arabic or Persian book, although the alphabet is Bengali. The literature in Musalmānī Bengali has no merit, and some of the deathless tales of pre-Moslem Persia, as in the 'Shāh-nāmah', and of early Islām, have been ruined by the hack versifiers of Calcutta and Chittagong in rendering them in this jargon".[1]

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1. Chatterji, S.K. The origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, pp.210-12.

Sukumar Sen expressed various opinions regarding Dobhāṣī diction in his works. In his book Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās he says: "The cultivation and appreciation of so called 'Islāmi' literature greatly increased in the later part of the 18th century among the little educated Muslim society. It is not true that the persons who used to write Musalmānī 'Keechā' had a poor knowledge of Bengali; but the original Urdu, Persian or Hindi works which they adapted in Bengali were responsible for the excessive use of Arabic, Persian and Hindi words in their language. The ordinary readers could not appreciate their literature due to their mixture of languages and as a result their works were banished from the literary field of Bengal."[1] In another book called Islāmi Bāṅglā Sāhitya, Sen observes: "What we nowadays understand by the term 'islāmi bāṅglā' was created in the last part of the 19th century. Before its creation the Muslim writers used sādhubhāṣā in their works with a sprinkling of Perso-Arabic words. Some of the Perso-Arabic words they used were well-known only to the Muslim population and others were the common property of the work-a-day language of both Hindus and Muslims."[2]

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1. Sen, S. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās. Vol.I (2nd edition), Calcutta, 1948, p.915
2. Sen, S. Islāmi Bāṅglā Sāhitya, Burdwan, 1951, p.183

In his third book, History of Bengali Literature he observes: " By the beginning of the eighteenth century a literary and cultural centre of the West Bengal Muslims was established in the Bhursut (ancient Bhūriśreṣṭhi) region on the lower reaches of the Damodar. The mid-eighteenth century poet Bhārat Candra Rāẏ belonged to this region and his highly Persianized style of poetry reflects the influence of the style of the popular Muslim writers of that locality. ---- The early nineteenth century Muslim writers of this region are not worth mention here. They wrote mainly for the consumption of the illiterate people residing in Calcutta, and they drew largely from Persian, Hindi and Urdu popular romance. Their language was so much saturated with Perso-Arabic and Hindi words that it was often unintelligible to persons not acquainted with those tongues. This jargon was known as Muslim Bengali. It was a creation by the West Bengal Muslim writers and was taken up by their North and East Bengal brethren only towards the close of the nineteenth century."[1]

Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibritta, a book written jointly by Muhammad Abdul Hai and Saiẏdd Ali Ahsan and was published by the University of Dacca in 1956. In this book the authors

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1. Sen,S. History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, pp.157-58

expressed the opinion that after the death of Bhārat Candra (1760), the Kabiyālās and Dobhāṣī puthi writers carried the cultural life of Bengal up to 1800 A.D.[1] Regarding the development of Dobhāṣī literature they observed " We have named this (literature) Dobhāṣī pũthi because in it Perso-Arabic words were used in large numbers along with Bengali. Some of these pũthis were composed in Calcutta but most of them were composed in the country villages. In the cities people from different parts of India used to assemble for many purposes. Some as soldiers, some for carrying on business and trade or for some temporary purpose. It is not unlikely that Dobhāṣī pũthis were written in a mixed language to entertain them. Apart from this the subject matter of these pũthis were romantic and mysterious love-stories and their main object was to give pleasure to the readers. The use of Perso-Arabic words in Bengali is not new in Bengali poems. Throughout the middle Bengali literature Perso-Arabic words were used to create particular situation or to make the society, customs or behaviour of Muslims lively,"[2]

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1. Hai,M.A. and Ahsan,S.A. Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibritta, Dacca University, 1956, p.20.
2. Ibid, pp.22-23.

Muhammad Enamul Haq wrote his book Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya in 1957. In this book he observes: "Dobhāṣī Bāṅglā' or 'Musalmānī bāṅglā is a creation of the British period. It was the dialect of little-educated and illiterate Muslims of lower Bengal who were influenced by the Ohābī movement.---- Titumīr (1831) and Dudhu miā (1847) were residents of this area. Their movements for religious reform called the Ohābī and Farāẏejī movements respectively influenced this area. Even before this influence the Hindus took lead in the cultivation of Modern Bengali literature. The continued Hindu hostility to Muslims resulted in a recrudescence of Muslim consciousness of their separate identity and the muslims especially of lower Bengal, filled their language with more and more Persian and Urdu words. This language gained popularity through the Ohābī and Farāẏejī movements and a good deal of religious literature was produced in it. Muslims of Hawra, Hugli and the 24 parganas did a brisk trade in printing and publishing these books in the baṭṭalā[1] presses of Calcutta. Until much later, high-brow Bengali Muslims contemptuously called this literature 'baṭṭalār pũthi'. Even today the term is used to express opprobrium."[2]

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1. The word baṭṭalā means 'under the banyan' ie.out-of-doors. The baṭṭalā press was a type of chief printing press in Calcutta in the 19th century.
2. Haq,M.E. Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya. Dacca, 1957,pp.277-9

It is noteworthy that all these comments are brief and very general. The majority of critics have made no attempt to analyse the language. The passing analyses made by S.K. Chatterji and S.Sen are not sufficient to explain the nature and character of Dobhāṣī diction. No critic has made a detailed examination of the Dobhāṣī texts or constructed the history of the literature in that diction. An attempt to do so is made in the following chapters.

CHAPTER IX

The problems of Nomenclature and Origin

A variety of names have during the past century been applied to the diction we have known as Dobhāṣī and the literature in which it is used, but though the term Dobhāṣī has now achieved a certain currency it is not certain that the issue is yet settled. It is not surprising that it was late in the history of Dobhāṣī that it was found necessary to apply a name to it, or that the need to do so was first felt by a foreign scholar. The history of census returns contains much evidence of people not knowing or feeling the need to use a name for their own language.

In the introductory note referred to above the Rev.J.Long applied the name Musalman Bengali Literature to the texts he was cataloguing. This, as far as can be traced, is the first application of a name to this branch of Bengali literature. Hunter followed Long's lead and called the diction itself Musalman Bengali. It is important to note that Long's catalogue, dated 1855 A.D., is about a hundred years later than the work of Garibullāh and Bhārat Candra Rāy. The latter's phrase bhāṣā yābani misāl is clearly a description and not a title.

From then on a variety of terms were coined. Some

critics followed Long, but others employed quite different terms. Siddiki named the literature baṭṭalār pūthi. The word pūthi is derived from Sanskrit pustaka (book), and though in other contexts it has the meaning manuscript it was used by Siddiki to connote printed books in this particular diction. The phrase baṭṭalār, a nominal phrase in the genitive case, means literally under the banyan with the implication that the books in question were printed in cheap presses, and not in established printing houses. It is hard to resist the feeling that it had for a time at any rate a derogatory significance. Āhsan Ullāh made a compromise in the term Musalmāni puthi. Hākim named the diction Islāmi bāṅglā, and the literature written in it puthi sāhitya. D.C.Sen adopted Long's nomenclature with a slight variation. He added the Bengali suffix -i and arrived at the term Musalmāni Bengali. S.K.Chatterji also employed this title. S.Sen invented yet further term. He used the term Muslim Bengali for the diction. Hai and Ahsan was the first to employ the term Dobhāṣī. They call works in the diction Dobhāṣī puthi. E. Haq uses two terms Dobhāṣī bāṅglā and Musalmānī bāṅglā.

There is no documentary evidence to show how Hai and Ahsan arrived at the term Dobhāṣī, but as the word has wide currency in the speech of the people of East

Pakistan and West Bengal, it can be assumed that this was its source. There are two names for the literature in current usage Dobhāṣī puthi sāhitya and puthi sāhitya. The word Dobhāṣī had been a popular term long before Hai and Ahsan employed it, and there is no doubt that they were wise to follow popular usage. The use of the term in this work is based on that assumption.

The word Dobhāṣī obviously means derived from two languages, and is therefore an over-simplification, as the language contains elements from more than two languages, namely Bengali, Arabic, Persian and Hindustani. Nevertheless it has a logical justification. The three languages Arabic, Persian and Hindustani all came into Bengal as part of Muslim culture, and can therefore be regarded as forming one group, bound together by certain characteristics which differentiate them from the indigenous language Bengali with which they became mixed. The term therefore can be interpreted as meaning Bengali and Islamic, if that word may be coined to cover the group of languages which came into Bengal with Islamic culture.

The word pũthi or puthi is now established in popular and scholastic use to cover works written or printed in Dobhāṣī. It has been defined as a word which "connotes a work which is either a narrative or a treatise in verse,

written during or after the 18th century in a mixed diction characterised by the fusion of Arabic, Persian and Bengali words."[1] The longer term baṭṭālār puthi arose naturally by association with the cheap printing presses, baṭṭalā, which were used for the publication of this type of literature from the early decades of the 19th century. Baṭṭalār puthis are different in form from other books printed in Bengal. The fount of type used was larger than that used in other publications. In time this larger type later became established as peculiar to the puthis, and printing presses in other parts of Bengal adopted it exclusively. The puthi books can therefore be recognised on sight. One other feature which distinguishes them is that though they are printed in the Bengali character and from left to right on the page, they are bound in such a way as to begin like works in Arabic and Persian from the end of the book.

Scholars have advanced different opinions regarding the origin and development of Dobhāṣī diction, and as they differ quite significantly it is requisite to state them in order.

Long maintained that the Muslims of Bengal created

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1. Hussain, S.S. (edited), A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts, Dacca, 1960, Introduction, p.XVIII.

a mixed diction as 'a kind of lingua franca', because as he says they were 'averse to learning the vernaculars'. He pointed out also that the Muslims had an affection for the Persian language and that they were inclined to resist 'foreign influence' by which he seems to have meant the influence of English. Hunter observed that Dobhāṣī owed its origin to the influence of Islam in lower Bengal. He drew attention to the close association between the Islamic religion and the Arabic and Persian languages, which with the spread of the religion in certain areas began to exert an influence on the local language.

Siddiki's view is quite different. He claimed that the diction was a natural growth in Bengal in view of the mixture of races and languages which had been taking place there since the Muslim invasion in the 13th century.

The opinion of Hākim, which is supported by both D.C.Sen and S.K.Chatterji, is that Dobhāṣī diction was developed by the Muslims as a rival language as against the Sanskritised Bengali created by the Hindu pandits. Sen described Dobhāṣī as one of the two extremes of Bengali style: the one extreme being the 'Urduised' style of the Muslims, the other the 'Sanskritised' style of the pandits. S.K.Chatterji concurred with this view. He said that Dobhāṣī was the creation of 'Urdu-knowing Maulavis' and that

it was the 'Maulavis' reply to the Pandits' sādhū-bhāṣā of the early and middle part of the 19th century.'

Sukumar Sen's views vary. He first stated that Dobhāṣī literature 'flourished among the little educated Muslim community from the last decade of the 18th century.' In another place he says that Dobhāṣī diction and literature were 'created in the last part of the 19th century.' His third view is that the Muslim poets of West Bengal founded a centre of Dobhāṣī literature in Bhursut about the beginning of the 18th century. With regard to causes he thought that it was the nature of the literature cultivated in this diction which was responsible for the excessive use of 'Arabic, Persian and Hindi words' in it. He also said that the saturation of Perso-Arabic and Hindi words made this literature 'unintelligible to the common readers', who 'banished them from the field of literature.'

Hai and Ahsan assumed that Dobhāṣī diction and literature were created for the pleasure of the people of cities who had assembled from different parts of India to live there; though elsewhere they state that the greater part of this literature was created in villages.

Haq has concluded that Dobhāṣī diction was the colloquial language of the Muslims of lower Bengal, and that its later development was influenced by the religious reform

movements in the first half of the 19th century. He also said that the reform movements helped this literature to flourish as a reaction against the political and cultural influence on Bengali literature which was beginning to be exerted by Hindu writers.

At this point all that need be said by way of comment is that none of these critics mention the fact that the Dobhāṣī diction was first used by Hindu poets in the 15th century and more widely in the 16th and 17th centuries; and that during this period Muslim poets employed only the standard Bengali of the time.

Siddiki's claim that Dobhāṣī was a natural growth, Haq's suggestion that it was the colloquial language of the Muslims of lower Bengal, the views of Hākim, D.C.Sen and Chatterji that it was deliberately invented by orthodox Muslims as a counterblast to the language which was being developed by the Hindu pandits, or the opinion advanced by Hai and Ahsan that it came into existence in the villages and was later supplied to the cities for the delectation of the urban population who spoke other languages, are matters which require detailed examination. This is attempted later, but comment may be made here on Sukumar Sen's contention that it was the adoption by poets of subjects from Arabic, Persian and Urdu literature which was responsible for the

importation of a large number of exotic words. This does not seem reasonable in view of the fact, stated above, that though Muslim poets in the medieval period did in fact adopt themes from the literature Sen mentioned, they nevertheless wrote them in standard Bengali not in Dobhāṣī. The poet Ālāol may be cited against Sen's view. He wrote on imported themes in the indigenous language, indeed he went further, as D.C.Sen says. "Alaol is the first of the poets who aimed at word-painting and at that finished Sanskritic expression which is the forte of the Bengali literature of the 18th century."[1] It may also be observed that some Muslim poets continued to write on imported themes in the standard language during the 18th and 19th centuries after Dobhāṣī literature had begun to flourish.[2]

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1. Sen,D.C.History of Bengali Language and Literature,Calcutta, (University), 1911, p.624.
2. Haq, M.E. op.cit., Chapter V.

CHAPTER X

The Influence of Arabic, Persian and Hindustani.

Arabic, the language of the religion of Islam, and Persian, the language of Muslim culture and administration, started exerting their influence in Bengal from the beginning of the 13th century, when Muslims from outside India conquered Bengal. The Muslim rule in Bengal lasted for over 500 years and during this long period a large number of words and some grammatical forms were imported into the Bengali language from Arabic and Persian and, later from Hindustani.[1]

Muslim rule in Bengal can broadly be divided into two periods, identified with two racial dynasties, Pathan and Moghal. The Pathan period ran from the 13th century to the last quarter of the 16th century; the Moghal period from the last quarter of the 16th century, when Akbar annexed Bengal to the Moghal empire of India, to 1764 when the East India Company took over the political control of Bengal. But

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1. Chatterji, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Calcutta University,1926, p.206 also Vol.II, Chapter - Morphology, Formative Affixes. Chatterji estimated that some 2500 words from Perso-Arabic and Hindustani languages have come to Bengali 'as a permanent addition to the vocabulary' of the Bengali language. See also, Bāṅglā Bhāṣār Itibritta by M.Sahidullah,Dacca University,1960,pp. 8-10.

Persian as the language of the law court and of administration continued until 1835, when it was abolished by the Company's government. During the Pathan period the rulers were independent and Bengal was more or less isolated from the rest of India. In the Moghal period Bengal was ruled by the central authority of Delhi and was exposed to a much greater degree than before to influences from outside.

Contact with the Muslims in the Pathan period "brought in a number of Persian words into Bengali during the early period of Mohammadan rule. Many of the practices of the Sultan's darbār at Gour were adopted by the petty chiefs of Bengal, and engrafted on the old Hindu court customs and etiquette."[1] Hindus studied Persian, and even Brahmins used to read it, perhaps to obtain positions in the government. It is not surprising that there was some opposition to the changes that were being effected. "In the middle of the 16th century, Jayananda in his 'Caitanya-maṅgala' makes Caitanya describe the evils of Kalī age, among which are the wearing of a beard by Brāhmans, their reading Persian, putting on high boots, holding a stick and a bow, and reciting masnavī."[2]

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1. Chatterji, S.K. Op.cit., p.203.
2. Chatterji, S.K., ibid., p.204.

Administrative, judicial and military terms from the Persian language, and Arabic and Persian names of important Muslim personalities and classes began to enter the Bengali language from the earliest period of Muslim rule. "In all these ways, quite a number of Persian words came in by the end of the 16th century, as it is attested from literature."[1]

During the Moghal period the influence of the Persian language increased. During Pathan rule "the Persian borrowings were confined to essential words and therefore limited in number."[2] But from the emergence of Moghal rule in the later part of the 16th century "there remained no longer any barrier to the flow of such foreign words into the Bengali vocabulary."[3] In the Moghal period "Persian reigned supreme not only in the court but almost in every walk of life. There is hardly a single Arabic inscription dating from the

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1. Chatterji, S.K. Op.Cit., pp.203-4. In this connection the author has given the following 'rough figures' which "will give some idea of the rate of admission of Persian words into Bengali, in the course of the several centuries. Fourth quarter of the 14th century: 'Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtan', about 9500 lines, only 4 Persian words; fourth quarter of the 15th century: Vijaya Gupta's 'Padmāpurāṇ', some 18000 lines, about 125 words, ...middle of the 16th century, Mānik Gāngulī's 'Dharma-mangal', about 17000 lines, over 225 words; fourth quarter of the 16th century, Mukunda Rām Cakravarti's 'Candī-Kāvya', some 20,000 lines, between 200 and 210 words."
2. Sen,S.History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi,1960,p.6.
3. Sen,S., ibid.,p.6.

Moghal period. Persian was the language of the cultured classes; it was inscribed in the mosques and on coins, spoken in the court and written in revenue records etc.,etc. The social and educational status of a man was judged from his knowledge of Persian. It was the best recommendation for service of the crown. Hence the Hindus and the Muslims all laboured to learn Persian."[1] Kṛṣṇarām Dās, a 17th century Bengali poet describes the study of Persian by the students and Kāýastha Hindus. '(The hero) soon reached in the city of the King (and saw) boys were having lessons in Persian from the teachers. The Kāýasthas, who were learned in Persian works, were writing (Persian) with golden pens behind their ears and ink-pots in front of them."[2]

The dominance of the Persian language and its importance grew more and more and "in the 18th century the importance of it in the country was like that of English at the present day. Hindostānī, Bihārī and Bengali Munshīs taught Persian to the sons of rich people, and there were Maktabs and Madrasahs frequented both by Hindus and Musalmans."[3]

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1. Haq, M.E. op.cit., p.134.
2. Bhattacharji,S.N.Kabi Kṛṣṇarām dāser granthābalī,Calcutta University,1958, Introduction, p.41 (Text: "abilambe uttarila rājar nagare / bālake fārsī paṛe ākhon hujure // sonār kalam kāne doýāti sammukhe / kitābat nipuṇ kāýsthagaṇ, likhe")
3. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit. p.205.

The emergence of the Hindustani language as a lingua franca in India in the 17th century made the way more open for the importation of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements into Bengali. "Hindōstānī made itself the inheritor and propagator of the Persian and Moslem spirit in India, from the 17th and 18th century; and it came to Bengal, and Persian words which formerly were brought into Bengali mostly directly, now began to be admitted in larger numbers through Hindōstānī into Bengali and the various other vernaculars of the land. The result of it all was that towards the end of the 18th century, the Bengali speech of the upper classes, even among Hindus, was highly Persianised."[1]

It was in these circumstances that Halhed observed in 1778 that the knowledge in Persian was an "indispensable qualification for those who were to manage the extensive affairs of the East India Company."[2] He found the Bengali of his time largely mixed up with Persian words, so much so that he named it 'the modern jargon' and expressed his doubt regarding the feasibility of compiling 'a grammar of the pure Bengali dialect', in which it could be "expected to convey a thorough idea of the modern jargon of the Kingdom."[3]

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1. Chatterji,S.K. Op.cit., p.205.
2. Halhed,N.B.A Grammar of the Bengal Language, Hoogly,1778, Preface,pp.viii-ix.
3. Halhed, N.B. Ibid., Preface, p.xx.

He quoted a petition in prose, dated 1778, which he called 'debased Bengali', because of the excessive use in it of Persian words. This petition contains 61 words of which 26 are Perso-Arabic and Hindustani. The language of this petition which was the current language of such Bengali prose as existed ~~those has~~ probably remained in more or less the same form until the establishment of literary prose in the 19th century.

The occurrence of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words in such Bengali prose as has survived is a fact which has been noticed by all the important critics of Bengali language and literature from Halhed to the present time. In line with Halhed's remark in his grammar, W.Carey comments on this subject in the following words, though he is referring more specifically to the spoken language: "multitudes of words, originally Persian or Arabic, are constantly employed in common conversation, which perhaps ought to be considered as enriching rather than corrupting the language."[1] Carey had experience of the language used by different classes of people of Bengal which he recorded in his book, Dialogues, in 1801. In this book he recorded a dialogue between a Khānsāmā who was a Muslim

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1. Carey, W. A Grammar of the Bengali Language, Serampore,1801, Preface, p.III.

and an European.[1] In the preface of the book he observed that this class of person while "talking to an European, generally intermixes his language with words derived from the Arabic or Persian, and some few corrupted English and Portuguese words."[2] Another important critic of the early 19th century the Rev.W.Yates, remarked in his work, Introduction to the Bengali Language, while considering the different styles of the Bengali language, "another kind of style may be called the impure style, because it borrows too largely from the Hindi and Hindustani and partly also from the English. This is used by almost all Muhammadans who speak Bengali, by most persons in the employ of Europeans; and by those who are engaged in commerce and in judicial matters. It would be pedantry to proscribe all foreign words from the Bengali language; because in many cases they are the only terms which exist or which are likely to be understood."[3]

It would appear therefore that up to the beginning of the 19th century words of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani origin had found their way into the vocabulary of Bengali in a manner that was natural in the circumstances of a mixed

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1. The language of this dialogue has been analysed in the Chart No. III.
2. Carey, W. Dialogues, 2nd edition,Serampore,1806,Preface, p.v.
3. Yates,W.Introduction to the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Calcutta, 1847, p.121.

culture, and that so far there had been no objection to the process from either community. Carey's statement above quoted makes it clear that spoken Bengali was interlarded with words borrowed from Muslim sources. It does not follow that such words necessarily displaced words of Sanskritic origin but that they were received into the language to enable speakers of it to operate situations which a mixed culture and Muslim overlordship had created. These words were necessary if the ordinary people were to operate the situations of their ordinary life. Written Bengali drew on the same type of mixed vocabulary. The statement of Bhārat Candra Rāy, quoted above is proof of this. His remark that if what was written was to be understood by ordinary readers and hearers it had to be written in the language they were accustomed to, and that this language was bhāṣā yābani misāl, is confirmation beyond question. Both Carey and Bhārat Candra Rāy make it clear that in their opinion the language was richer for this inter-mixture of elements from different sources.

After Carey's time however opinion changed, and criticism of the mixed vocabulary began to be expressed. In the Calcutta Review of 1850 a long unsigned article entitled 'Early Bengali literature and newspapers'[1] indicated

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1. The Calcutta Review, Vol.XIII, January-June, 1850.

a new trend. It has been alleged that the anonymous author was Long.[1] The article makes reference to Rām Rām Basu's Rājāpratāpādityacaritra, which was written in 1801 under Carey's general supervision. The author describes its style as 'a kind of mosaic, half Persian and half Bengali.' He goes on to say that it 'indicates the pernicious influence which the Muhammadans had exercised over the Sanskrit derived languages of India.' Long elsewhere speaks of Basu's book as written in a style which was a kind of mosaic and which "shewed how much the unjust ascendancy of the Persian language had in that day corrupted the Bengali."[2] Whether these opinions were formed by Long after a study of the text is not known, though it is doubtful that he would have formed such a judgement had he known the text well. It is incredible however that Haraprasād Śāstrī should have echoed the same point of view some twenty years later, or that it should have become generally accepted by some later critics as a fair estimate of Basu's book. Śāstrī called Rājāpratāpādityacaritra 'unreadable and ugly' because of the Persian influence on its language.[3] The

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1. De, S.K. History of Bengali Literature, Calcutta University, 1919, p.166.
2. Long, J. A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works, (this catalogue has been reproduced in full in D.C.Sen's work, Bāṅglā Bhāṣā o Sāhitya, 8th ed., Calcutta, 1949), p.421.
3. Bangadarśan, Vol.VII and VIII, Calcutta, 1880-81.

facts are quite the reverse. S.K.Das in a recent dissertation has made a count of the Persian content of the vocabulary of this work, and has shown that it is very low, lower in fact than the Persian occurrences in the work of ~~his~~ Basu's orthodox Hindu contemporary Mṛtyunjay Bidyālankār.[1] More important however from our point of view than these judgements on Basu's style is the evidence they reveal of the growing attitude of Hindu critics and others towards a style of language which retained the Persian elements which had previously been received into the Bengali vocabulary. That a book could be dubbed unreadable and ugly because it contained some words derived from Persian is symptomatic of the trend of opinion in certain scholarly quarters in the 19th century. D.C.Sen confirms this conclusion when he writes of Hindu pandits who tried scrupulously "to avoid Arabic and Persian words in written Bengali, which they made as exclusive as a Hindu temple".[2] These pandits not only attempted to prune Bengali prose of Perso-Arabic words but they also gave it "a ridiculous air of so called dignity by imitating Sanskrit phrases and idioms and importing them into our vernacular."[3]

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1. Das.S.K.Early Bengali Prose,Carey to Vidyasagar,unpublished thesis for Ph.D.in the University of London,1963,pp.171-2.
2. Sen,D.C.Eastern Bengal Ballads,Vol.I,part I,Calcutta University, 1923, Introduction, p.lxiii.
3. Sen,D.C.Bengali Prose Style,Calcutta University,1921,p.73.

Thus a Bengali prose style was developed in the 19th century,[1] which was, to quote Sen again "a fantastic thing, unintelligible, foolish and full of unmeaning vain pedantry."[2] That this style did not gain more ground than it did is due to Carey and other European scholars. It has been observed in the previous pages that Carey thought that Perso-Arabic words enrich rather than corrupt the language. He sincerely "wanted that the people's language should be popularised in literature for the purpose of the spread of knowledge in the province."[3] It has also been observed that Yates, another European scholar, thought it "pedantry to proscribe all foreign words". He however strongly advocated the acceptance of 'indigenous terms' which have "every prospect of being as plain and intelligible as the exotic words now in common use."[4] In fact Carey and Yates tried to make the language easy and to keep the exotic vocabulary for the purpose of a popular and intelligible style without prejudice to the classical languages, Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. D.C.Sen summarised this effort of the European scholars in

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1. Sen,D.C.Bengali Prose Style, Calcutta University, 1921, p.73.
2. Sen,D.C., op.cit.,p.82.
3. Sen,D.C., ibid.,p.72.
4. Yates,W. op.cit, p.121.

the following words. "The European scholars tried to make our vernacular style simple, direct and to the point, so that the masses could be enlightened in modern science and literature."[1] Fortunately too there arose in Bengal in the last four decades of the century writers of genius, including principally Rabindranath, who would have none of this nonsense. The movement however had two important results: it created for the time being a wide gap between the language of the tongue and that of the pen, and between the Muslim writers who continued to operate the mixed vocabulary which was the inheritance of both communities and the pandits who continued to overload their prose with 'unintelligible' Sanskrit words and phrases.

The standard prose which developed in certain schools towards the middle of the 19th century and which became the vehicle of much though not all modern Bengali prose literature retained far fewer Perso-Arabic words than had been current in earlier generations. Such was the influence of these schools that a number of Muslim writers also wrote in Sādhubhāṣā, as this Sanskritised prose style was called.

It is unfortunate that a battle of the styles should have come to be associated with the two religious communities. There is evidence too that certain Christian missionaries

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1. Sen,D.C. Op.cit., p.86.

contributed to this movement apart. It is possible that the spoken language of some Muslims in the 19th century did contain a slightly higher proportion of Perso-Arabic words than that of the Hindus; but this can hardly justify the judgement of Yates that this was an 'impure style' of Bengali used by 'all Muhammadans who speak Bengali'; and still less the misleading statement which appeared in the Calcutta Review in 1854.[1] This article was seeking to justify the publication of tracts in 'Musalman Bengali' by the Calcutta Bible Society and contained the argument that they were intended for the 'use of Musalmans who cannot read pure Bengali, but who can understand a language half Urdu half Bengali'.

The impression that Perso-Arabic element in the Bengali vocabulary actually debased the language has continued into this century. Even so distinguished a scholar as S.K.De has had a hand in continuing it. He quoted Halhed out of context as follows. "At present those persons are thought to speak this compound idiom (Bengali) with the greatest elegance who mix with pure Indian verbs the greatest number of Persian and Arabic nouns."[2] This quotation was used to support an argument that the Perso-Arabic content of 18th

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1. The Calcutta Review, Vol.XXIII, July - December, 1854.
2. De, S.K. Op.cit., pp.282-83.

century Bengali was excessive. De makes his point by inserting the word Bengali in brackets in Halhed's text. The word is De's not Halhed's. But that is not all. Halhed was not writing of Bengali but of 'Hindostanie' as the whole of his passage on this subject makes clear. "The grammatical principles of the original Hindostanie, and the ancient forms of conjugation and inflexion remained the same; and whilst the primitive substantives were excluded or exchanged, the verbs maintained both their inflexions and their regimen. They still subsist in their pristine state; and at present those persons are thought to speak this compound idiom with the most elegance, who mix with pure Indian verbs the greatest number of Persian and Arabic nouns. Such of the Hindoos as have been connected with the Mussalman courts, or admitted to any offices under that government have generally complimented their masters by a compliance with these literary innovations."[1] It is impossible to justify De's lapse of scholarship in this respect, or that later critics should have quoted De's quotation of Halhed with the word Bengali erroneously inserted, and ascribe to Halhed's views he did not hold.[2]

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1. Halhed,N.B. Op.cit.,Preface,pp. xi-xii.
2. We have been able to find out the following works where the critics followed S.K.De's quotation of Halhed: (a)Bengali Prose Style by D.C.Sen,p.6; (b) Bāṅglā o Urdu, an article by M.Shahidullah published in the journal Māhe Nao,Dacca,August, 1954, p.98; (c) Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itibritta by M.A.Hai and S.A.Ahsan, p.23.

CHAPTER XI

Muslim Society and its Language Problems

The veneration of the Hindu pandits for Sanskrit and their openly expressed contempt for Bengali as a literary language are now established historical facts. It appears that there was from the very early days a similar attitude to Bengali in Muslim society, matched by a similar high regard for Arabic and Persian. The two latter languages were the recognised vehicles of religious and literary composition, and the attempts of Muslim poets to use the local language for these purposes were viewed with disfavour. This is apparent from the fact that a number of writers who did work through the medium of Bengali found it necessary to justify their doing so.

The earliest known Muslim poet Sāh Mahammad Sagīr says in his poem Ichuf-jalikhā (1389-1409) in connection with the language of his work: "Now I am going to talk about the language of the manuscript. I wish to be firm while at the same time avoiding sin, fear and shame. People get pleasure from the language used in various poems, and whatever a man is attached to will make his mind happy. People are afraid to write Ketābs (i.e. books based on Arabic and Persian originals) in Bengali. Everyone will blame me but

it is not right that they should. I have thought about this subject and I have come to realise that such fears are false. If what is written is true, it does not matter what language it is written in. I have heard wise men say that one's mother tongue is the most precious jewel in the treasury of wealth."[1] It is interesting to note that the mother tongue of this early Muslim writer was Bengali.

Saiýad Sultān, a Muslim poet of the 16th century who wrote several works, says: "Whatever language God created for a man that language is his greatest treasure.... The people who cannot understand their own language criticise me and say that what I have written is like the poetry of the Hindus. When they read my book they call me a traitor because I have Hinduised the language of Ketābs."[2]

The poet Āfjāl Ali hits back strongly against the

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1. Text: "caturthe kahimu kichu pothār kathan / pāp bhaýeṛi lāj darba kari man // nānā kābya kathā rase maje naragaṇ / yār yei śradhāý santoṣ kare man / na lekhe ketāb kathā mane bhaý pāe / doṣiba sakal tāk eha na juýae // gunýā dekhilum āmhi eha bhaý michā / na haý bhāṣāý kichu haý kathā sācā / śuniýāchi mahājane kahite kathan / ratan bhāṇḍār madhye bacan se dhan //" quoted in M.E.Haq's 'Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya', p.59.
2. Text: yāre yei bhāṣe prabhu karila srijan / sei bhāṣ tāhār amūlya ratan //....ye sabe āpnā bol na pāre bujhite / pāñcālī racilun kari āchae doṣite / monāfek bale more kitabeta paṛi / kitāber kathā dilum hiduýānī kari //" quoted by M.E.Haq in his article, Kabi Saiýd Sultān, published in Sāhitya pariṣat patrikā, Calcutta, 1941, Vol.41, No.2.

people who looked down upon him for writing in Bengali. In his didactic poem, Nasihat nāmā (1532-33) he says: "The people who ridicule me for writing scriptures (in Bengali) are themselves traitors."[1]

Another 16th century poet Hāji Mahammad advises his readers not to despise the Bengali language because of its association with the Hindus but to regard it as a most valuable thing: "Do not despise what I have written because it is in the 'hinduāni' charaqter. There is great value in the Bengali language. So why should we despise it?"[2]

The poet Sekh Muttālib of the 16th century fears that he has committed sin by writing scriptures in Bengali but he consoles himself with the thought that he has done good to faithful Muslims: "I am sure that I have committed a great sin in that I have written the Muslim scriptures in Bengali. But this I am sure of in my inner heart that the faithful will understand my book and bless me. There will

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1. Text: "upahāsya kare buli monāfekgaṇ / āẏet hādich lekhiẏāchi tekāraṇ //" quoted in Haq's 'Muslim Bāṅglā Sāhitya', p.75.
2. Text: "hinduāni akṣar dekhi nā karia helā // bāṅgālā akṣar pare āñji mohādhan / tāke helā karibek kiser karaṇ //" quoted in S.S.Husain's 'A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts', p.271.

be great virtue in the blessings of the faithful and Allah will surely forgive me my sins."[1]

The same type of fear was expressed by the poet Abdun Nabi of the 17th century in his book, Āmirhāmjā (1684). He says: "I am afraid in my heart that God will be angry with me because I have written the Muslim scriptures in Bengali. But I reject that fear in order to do good to the common people."[2]

Perhaps the most strongly worded argument in favour of the Bengali language is that of Abdul Hākim of the 16th century. He says: "Whatever language God has given to man in any country God understands that language. God understands all languages whether they be the language of the Hindus or the Vernacular language of Bengal or anything else.... The people who being born in Bengal despise the Bengali language cast doubt on their own birth. The people who do not like the language and learning of their own country should leave it, and go and live somewhere else. For generations our ancestors have lived in Bengal. Instruction

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1. Text: "muchalmāni śastra kathā bāṅgālā karilum / bahu pāp haila mor niścae jānilum // kintu mātra bharasā āchae manāntare / bujiā mumine doā kariba āmāre // muminer āsirbāde puya haibek / abasya gafur āllā doṣ khemibek //" quoted in S.S.Husain's Op.cit., p.61.
2. Text: "muchalmāni kathā dekhi maneha darāi / rachile bāngālā bhāse kope ki gesāi // lok upakār hetu teji sei bhae / dara bhābe rachibāre iśchilum hridae //" quoted in S.S.Husain's Ibid.,p.3.

in the language of the country is good for the mind."[1]

In spite of the opposition of certain classes of Muslims in Bengal against the writing of Bengali a large number of Muslim poets cultivated Bengali literature throughout the medieval period.[2] They introduced different new themes into Middle Bengali most of which were taken from Arabic, Persian or Hindi works. Yet there is not a single known instance in which they overloaded their language with Perso-Arabic or Hindi words or employed Dobhāṣī diction. Their language was always standard Bengali of the time. It is clear too from what they wrote that they were all Bengali Muslims, and that Bengali was their mother tongue.

It is true that they had to use certain terms of Perso-Arabic origin when indigenous equivalents were not available, and that as exotic elements began to find a regular place in the Bengali vocabulary they used them too. It would have been unnatural not to do so. Nevertheless the proportion of such words is small, and in no case is it large enough to point out the Muslim origin of the poet.

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1. Text: "yei dese yei bākṣa kahe naragaṇ / sei bākṣa bujhe prabhu āp nirañjan / sarba bākṣa bujhe prabhu kibā hinduẏāṇi / baṅga desi bākṣa kiba jata iti bāni // .....je sabe baṅgeta jarmi himse baṅga bāni / se sab kāhār jarmma nirnae nā jāni / desi bhāsā bidyā jār mane nā yuẏae // nij des tyāgi kena bidese nā jāe / mātā pitāmoho krame baṅgeta basati / desi bhāsā upades man hit ẏati //" quoted in S.S.Husain's op.cit., p.234.
2. See Chapter II.

Hindu and Muslim poets of the medieval period can be distinguished by their subjects but not by their vocabulary.

When in the 18th century Muslim poets began to compose in Dobhāṣī they utilised the same subjects which had been introduced into Bengali by their earlier co-religionists who wrote in Bengali not in Dobhāṣī. This would seem to dispose of the argument that Dobhāṣī diction owed its origin to the adoption in Bengali of exotic Islamic themes. Dobhāṣī had been used as an occasional literary language for centuries before the advent of Garibullāh.

The Muslims of Bengal have always had great respect for the Arabic and Persian languages. They consider themselves bound by sacred ties of religion with the people of Arabia and Persia. They studied literature, law, theology and philosophy in these languages. The Muslims of Bengal were and still are, obliged to read or hear their scriptures in Arabic and Persian and in this way they have become familiar with these languages. The Arabic language and its characters are considered holy and are greatly respected. The same Ābdul Hākim who very strongly supported the Bengali language and learning in Bengali also expressed his great respect for the Arabic and Persian languages, and called Arabic learning the master of all learning and Persian learning as second only to Arabic: "The early period of

(human) life is the best time for acquiring education. The person who does not obtain education at that period of his life, remains ignorant. An ignorant person is like a dark house without lamp.....Learn Arabic and through Arabic study religious scriptures. Arabic education is best of all learning. If you cannot learn Arabic then learn Persian and through it good things. If you cannot learn Persian you should study scriptures through your Vernacular.....Arabic is the best of all learning and Persian is its son."[1]

The Muslims of Bengal therefore resolved the conflict between Arabic and Bengali by a compromise similar to that which the Hindus reached in the solution of their conflict between Sanskrit and Bengali: they venerated Arabic, and to a lesser extent Persian, and used it as the language of religion, but they spoke and wrote in Bengali. Brahmins like Mukundarām in the 16th century and Mrityunjay Bidyālankār in the 19th had the utmost respect for Sanskrit, but they wrote in their

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1. Text: "pratham bayase hena uttam samay / hena kāle bidyāhīn jebā murkha hae // jehena pradīp hīn griha andhakār / tehena jānibā bidyāhīn je kumār // .... ārbi pariyā bujha śāstrer bacan / jatek elem maidhye ārbi pradhān // ārbi parite yadi nā pāra kadācit / fārchi pariyā bujha parinām hit // fārchi parite jadi nā pāra kadācit / nij desi bhāse śāstra parite ucit // ... jatek elem maidhye ārbi bākhāni // fārchi elem hae ārbi tanae /" quoted in S.S.Husain's op.cit., p.250.

native Bengali. It is probable however that the conflict was not as severe during the medieval period as it was later when political and communal passions began to develop in the 19th century.

By tradition a Muslim child begins his education with Arabic by hearing and reciting verses from the Koran in that language, while a Hindu child begins his in Bengali by worshipping Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning.[1] Perhaps this respect for the Arabic language and its alphabet was responsible for the later practice of writing Bengali manuscripts in Arabic characters. There are about 50 such

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1. W.Adam in his "Second Report on the State of Education in Bengal", (Calcutta, 1836), gives the following description: "It is expressly prescribed by the authorities of Hindu law that children should be initiated in writing and reading in their fifth year; or, if this should have been neglected, then in the seventh, ninth or any subsequent year being an odd number. Certain months of the year, and certain days of the month and week, are also prescribed as propitious to such a purpose; and on the day fixed, a religious service is performed in the family by the family-priest, consisting principally of the worship of Saraswati, the goddess of learning, after which the hand of the child is guided by the priest to form the letters of the (Bengali) alphabet, and he is also then taught, for the first time, to pronounce them." p.11. "Like the Hindus, however, the Musalmans formally initiate their children into the study of letters. When a child, whether a boy or a girl, is four years, four months, and four days old, the friends of the family assemble, and the child is dressed in his best clothes, brought in to the company, and seated on a cushion in the presence of all. The alphabet, the form of letters used for computation, the Introduction to the Koran, some verses of Chapter LV., and the whole of Chapter LXXXVII, are placed before him, and he is taught to pronounce them in succession. If the child is self-willed, and refuses to read he is made to pronounce the Bismillah, which answers every purpose, and from the day his education is deemed to have commenced." p.24.

manuscripts in the collection of Abdul Karim Sāhityabiśārad[1] but they are all of a fairly late date and may be due to more recent political and social developments. They are supposed to have been copied during the 19th century.[2] The earliest evidence of Arabic transliteration of Bengali is the Munāyāt by Mahammad Fasih. He is assumed to have been a poet of the 17th century.[3] He gave a transliteration list in which the Bengali alphabet and the Arabic transcription were set down together. The language of his book is the standard Bengali of Middle Bengali literature.[4]

It appears that the practice of writing Bengali works in Arabic characters lingered even up to the first part of the present century, when certain works were also printed in Arabic.[5] But in all cases the process was one of transliteration only; it had nothing to do with the language and style of the work. Many works of the Middle Bengali period, which were written in standard Bengali, were later transcribed

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1. Hundreds of manuscripts of Middle Bengali Muslim writers were collected by Sāhityabiśārad of Chittagong who died in 1953. His collections are now preserved in the library of the University of Dacca. A Descriptive Catalogue of his manuscript collections was published by the University of Dacca in Bengali in 1958, and an English edition of that Catalogue was published by the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, ed. S.S. Husain in 1960.
2. Husain, S.S. op.cit., pp.10, 37, 40, 44, 45, 64-5. etc.
3. Haq, M.E., op.cit., p.222.
4. Ibid, p.222.
5. There is a Bengali work in the British Museum called Ihsān al Mumenīn by M.Rahman, printed in Arabic characters in Calcutta, 1904.

in Arabic.[1] This practice might have developed at the hands of Arabic-knowing Bengali Muslims who at a later period advocated the adoption of the Arabic script for the Bengali language. This movement however was strongly opposed and ultimately rejected by the literate Muslim community,[2] and as a result of it now there remains only a trace of the practice of Arabic transliteration. In other parts of the Indo-Pak subcontinent Muslims have accepted and standardised "the use of the Arabic character. The chief of these are Urdū, Sindhī, Punjābī, Tāmil and Kashmīrī."[3] The adoption of the Arabic characters for Bengali was rejected possibly as a result of some sort of love for their own language and its original form on the part of the people of Bengali speaking regions of India and Pakistan irrespective of religious faith.[4]

It is extremely difficult to establish precisely the relationship between Dobhāṣī dcition and the spoken dialects of the Muslims of Bengal, because there is no extant example

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1. Husain,S.S.op.cit.,pp.44-5,280,288. Works like Nabibaṃśa of Sultān and Padmabatī of Ālāol was transcribed into Arabic in the 19th century.
2. Islām Darśan, Vol.I,No.IV,Calcutta,1916.
3. Titus,M.T. Indian Islam, London,1930,p.240.
4. In this connection the language movement of East Pakistan can be taken into account. There was a great public movement in East Pakistan for the acceptance of Bengali as one of the two state languages of Pakistan after the partition of India until Bengali was accepted as one of the two state languages of Pakistan in the Constitution of Pakistan.

of the colloquial language of Muslims, nor is any reference made to it during the Middle Bengali period when Dobhāṣī was growing as a peculiar diction in the works of Hindu poets.

The first reference to the current language of Bengal is that made in the grammar of Halhed in 1778, but it is a reference only not a description. Halhed called Modern Bengali, i.e., the Bengali current during his time, a 'jargon', because of the intermixture of Perso-Arabic vocabulary elements.[1] The petition he quoted as an example of 'jargon' is a piece of work-a-day prose. It can be assumed that its language is nearer to the colloquial than to the literary form.

Carey gives an example of the dialect of a Muslim Khānsāmā who "intermixes his language with words derived from the Arabic or Persian."[2] This cannot be taken as a fully authentic example of the colloquial language, but it is the nearest approximation to it we have.

Yates comments that 'almost all Muhammadans who speak Bengali' use a language of 'impure style' which "borrows too largely from the Hindi and Hindustani".[3] He did not,

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1. Halhed, N.B. op.cit., Preface, p.xx.
2. Carey, W. Dialogues, 2nd edition, Serampore, 1806, Preface, p.V. The book was first published in 1801.
3. Yates, W. op.cit. p.121.

however quote any example of the 'impure style' of the Muslims.

Another comment on the dialect of Muslims was made in 'The Calcutta Review' in 1854. It is in a review of a Christian missionary book especially written for Muslims. It says that the Muslims 'cannot read pure Bengali' but they "can understand a language half Urdu half Bengali."[1] The book under reference was one published by the Calcutta Bible Society which had been publishing books of this type for many years. An examination of the language the Society employed in their publications for Muslims reveals that it is not 'half Urdu half Bengali'. It is Bengali with an admixture of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words.[2]

It is probable that the comments of the above-mentioned scholars were based on the language spoken by some of the Muslims of Calcutta and the area adjacent to it. The references however are expressed in general terms which make it impossible to deduce the proportion of non-Bengali to Bengali words. Yates uses the word 'largely', from which it may be gathered that the proportion was fairly high. It was certainly high enough for the speech of the Muslims to be distinguished as a separate dialect, or 'jargon' as Halhed

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1. The Calcutta Review, vol.XXIII, July-December, 1854.
2. See Chart III.

calls it. One must be cautious however because the use of a few exotic words in significant places could be sufficient to give a distinctive colour to the whole.

The opinions of Halhed, Carey and Yates cannot be taken as valid for the speech of the millions of Muslims who lived in the countryside of Bengal or for the language of the Muslims who established centres of literary activity in the eastern part of Bengal, where they constituted a vast majority of the population. The nature of their language we possibly can infer from the comments of Adam who in the course of his extensive survey of the indigenous educational system of Bengal came into contact with a cross section of the Muslims in the interior of Bengal. He found that "the rural Musalman population speak Bengali, attend, indiscriminately with Hindus, Bengali schools; and read, write correspond and keep accounts in that language."[1] He also found that many 'Musalman teachers of Bengali schools' were teaching 'Hindu as well as Musalman scholars', and that there were hundreds of 'Musalman scholars in Bengali schools' who with the Hindu scholars "assemble in the same school house, receive the same instructions from the same teacher."[2]

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1. Adam, W. Third Report on the State of Education in Bengal, Calcutta, 1838, p.214.
2. Ibid., p.40.

These remarks of Adam suggest that the speech of the Muslims in the areas he visited differed little from that of the Hindus who lived in the same districts. It is improbable that children sitting in the same classroom at the feet of the same teacher of language would continue to speak different dialects for long, even if their mother tongues were somewhat different, and we have no evidence that they were.

It is certain however, that there was a difference between the language used by Muslims in Calcutta and that used by their co-religionists in the country areas of Bengal. This is probably due to the fact that the Muslim population of Calcutta included a fairly large proportion of immigrants from other parts of northern India whose mother tongue was still or had been Hindustani. W.W.Hunter throws some light on this difference. He observed that the Muslim students of Calcutta Madrasah who came from the interior parts of Bengal and who 'at home were engaged in ploughing their little fields or plying their boats speak the rude peasant dialect' which was "unintelligible to the Calcutta Musalman."[1]

Further evidence of the Calcutta Muslim dialect is

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1. Hunter,W.W.The Indian Musalmans, London,1871,p.200.

found in the novel Ālāler gharer dulāl (1858). The novel contains a Muslim character called Ṭhak Cācā (cheat uncle), who can be described as an urban tout. His dialect is characterised by a high proportion of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words. He also employs some Hindustani verbal forms and Hindustani roots (dhātu) alongside Bengali corresponding forms, together with some hybrid formations. Chart IV shows that such words are approximately 40 per cent of the vocabulary, but as Ṭhak Cācā is presented for satirical purposes, it is just to assume that his linguistic peculiarities were intentionally exaggerated.

The earliest examples of the dialect of the Muslims of rural Bengal are recorded in the work of Grierson.[1] These dialects represent the Bengali speech of the Muslims of interior Bengal during the last part of the 19th century, because though the work was published in 1903, the survey was made a number of years before the actual date of publication.[2] Two Muslim dialects one from Mymensingh district and one from the Noakhali district were examined.[3] They are simple Bengali and have no similarity with Dobhāṣī diction

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1. Grierson, G.A. Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.V, part I, Calcutta, 1903.
2. Ibid, p.206. In some places of his work Grierson gives date of collection of the dialects he quotes, e.g., the dialect of Dacca district was collected in 1898.
3. See Chart IV.

or the dialect of Ṭhak Cācā of Calcutta. The Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words in these dialects are far fewer in number than those found in Dobhāṣī, or in the dialect of Ṭhak Cācā, or in the petitions of the 18th and 19th centuries, or in the books of Christian Missionaries especially written for the Muslims. But it is also true that even the rural Muslims employed a larger number of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words in their dialect than the rural Hindus. A comparative study of the dialects of rural Muslims and Hindus will make this fact clear.[1]

The percentage of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani words used by Muslims in the Bengali they spoke varies, therefore from place to place and even in some cases from family to family. It is probable that in some areas by certain groups of people particularly in Calcutta and Hugli, the language spoken was Hindustani and not Bengali at all. Controversy on this subject has continued until our own generation. Hindustani[2] as Halhed observed, was 'utterly unintelligible to the villagers and peasants' of Bengal but it was used 'in large town frequented by Mahometans'[3]. Carey observed that Urdu was spoken 'by the

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1. See Chart IV.
2. Halhed called the language as Moors. It is also called Hindustani. In this work we have used the word Hindustani to mean Urdu.
3. Halhed,N.B.op.cit. Preface, p.xiv.

higher class of Muslamans' and in 'the large cities, where the Musalman princes keep their courts - - - but in places remote from courts and camps it is scarcely known.'[1] Adam observed that 'the Hindustani or Urdu is the current spoken language of the educated Musalmans of Bengal.'[2] By the phrase 'educated Musalmans of Bengal' Adam seems to mean those resident in the Western cities of the province. As far as is known he did not visit the eastern areas of Bengal.

In 1882, the government of India appointed an education commission under the Chairmanship of W.W.Hunter to suggest the measures necessary for the development of the education of the people of India. This commission gave special attention to the problems of the Muslims of India. The commission asked the opinion of Nawab Abdul Luteef, an influential Muslim of Calcutta and the Secretary of the 'Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta' established in 1863, regarding the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal. Luteef said that the vernacular of the Upper and Middle class Muslims was Urdu, because these two classes came into Bengal from Arabic, Persia and Central Asian countries and settled permanently. The

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1. Carey, W. A Dictionary of the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Serampore, 1815, Preface, p. vi.
2. Adam, W. op.cit.,p.76.

vernacular of the lower class of Muslims who were ethnically the same as Hindus, was Bengali. He recommended Persianised Bengali which was current in the courts of Bengal as the medium of instruction for lower class of Muslims of Bengal.[1]

About ten years before this recommendation was made the government of Bengal rejected the idea that the vernacular of Muslims was Urdu. It said: "His Honour has come to the decided conclusion that however it may be in Behar, in Bengal it would not be desirable to encourage the Mahomedans to look to oriental languages for higher education. Their vernacular language is generally Bengalee, not Hindustanee, far less Urdu. They come pretty freely to indigenous Bengali schools."[2] It also observed the bitter feeling of Muslims against Sanskritized Bengali and said, 'It is certain that they would have no desire to be instructed in an artificial Sanskritized Bengalee such as some Bengalee scholars affect.'[3] It is reasonable to assume therefore that the vernacular of the Muslims of Bengal was found to be 'generally Bengalee' except among upper class Muslims, most of whom lived in large cities.

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1. Luteef,A.A Short Account of my humble efforts to promote Education, specially among the Mahomedans,Calcutta,1885,pp. 49-51.
2. From the Govt.Bengal to the Govt.of India, letter no.2918, 17th, August, 1872.
3. Ibid.,para. 6.

On the 14th September,1883, the Education Commission submitted its report to the Government of India. In this report seventeen special recommendations for the development of the education of Muslims of India were made. The fourth recommendation concerned their vernacular. 'That Hindustani be the principal medium for imparting instruction to Mahomedans in Primary and middle schools, except in localities where the Mahomedan community desire that some other language be adopted.'[1] It is a historical fact that in Bengal Muslims in general have used Bengali as the medium of instruction in Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools since 1883 and that the few schools where Hindustani was the medium of instruction, were located in the cities and attended by the children of Hindustani-speaking Muslims who form a very small percentage of the entire Muslim population of Bengal.

It is however true that a number of Hindustani-speaking Muslims lived in Bengal in the 18th and 19th centuries.[2] They

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1. Education Commissions Report, quoted in 'Rules and Objects of the Central Mahomedan Association', Calcutta,1885,p.79.
2. Though the first census of Bengal was made in 1881,it is not possible to find a correct figure of the linguistic population in terms of Bengali speaking regions because the province of Bengal included some parts of Assam,Bihar and Orissa until the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1912. The Province of Bengal as a Bengali speaking region was formed in 1912 and remained so until 1947,when it was divided into two parts, East Pakistan & West Bengal. The first report on the census of Bengal was prepared in 1921. In this report it can be found that there were 1,780,000 Muslims in Bengal speaking Urdu as their vernacular. It can be assumed however that this population was much smaller in number in the 18th and 19th centuries.

were the so-called upper class Muslims, many of whom were educated in the Arabic and Persian languages; and generally they despised Bengali as a 'language of idolatry.' They refused to send their children in the schools which 'conduct education in the vernacular of Bengal, a language which the educated Muhammadans despise ---- 'Nothing on earth', said a Muhammadan husbandman recently to an English official, 'would induce me to send my boy to a Bengali teacher.' '[1] Perhaps it was for this class of Muslim that the 'Dacca Mahomedan Friends' Association' conducted its primary examinations for girls in Urdu as well as in Bengali.[2]

The first socio-political organisation of the Muslims of the subcontinent was formed in Bengal in the year 1863 by Nawab (then Moulvi) Abdool Luteef Khan Bahadur.[3] It was formed in Calcutta from 'the most learned and influential members of the community' with the purpose 'of imparting useful information to the better classes of the Mahomedan community, who were mostly unacquainted with the English language.'[4] Another object of the Society was 'the promotion

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1. Hunter, W.W, op.cit, p.178.
2. The First Annual Report of the Dacca Muhammadan Friends' Association, Dacca, 1883, p.5.
3. Ruheemooddeen, M. A Quarter Century of the Mahomedan Literary Society of Calcutta, from 1863-1889, Calcutta, 1889, p.4.
4. Ruheemooddeen, M. ibid. p.4.

of social intercourse and interchange of thought among the different communities of Her Majesty's subjects'.[1] The languages of the Society was three, English, Persian and Urdu. It was an organisation of 'the better classes of the Mahomedan Community'. Perhaps most of them did not know the Bengali language or its literature. There is however no evidence that this Society hated Bengali. This we find in a later age. The so-called upper class Muslims (āśrāfs) used to say: "we are true āśrāfs (coming from the top class society of Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Bagdād etc.) Unfortunately our predecessors came to live in India. How can we learn Bengali? Can bāṅglā-fāṅglā be the language of the aristocratic Muslims"?[2]

It can be assumed that this class of Muslim had been despising Bengali and abusing the Muslim poets who contributed to Bengali literature in the Medieval period. They may be also responsible for the introduction of Arabic characters for writing Bengali. Perhaps their most vigorous attempt was to establish Urdu as the Mother tongue of all the Muslims of Bengal. This attempt was countered by the rising middle

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1. Ruheemooddeen,M. op.cit. p.6.
2. Sobhan,S.A. Hindu Mosalmān,Calcutta, 1888, p.97. The reduplicated form bāṅglā-fāṅglā is a derogatory expression in Bengali.

class Muslims in Bengal in the early 20th century. They called a man shameless who "being Bengali by birth claims Urdu or Arabic as his mother tongue and boasts by saying 'I do not know Bengali' or 'I have forgotten Bengali' - this is indeed a dreadful disease."[1] This section of Muslims are said to be 'a few disobedient urban sons (of Bengal) who call the step-mother mother instead of their own mother.'[2] These middle class Muslims called the Urdu movement 'absurd, unreasonable and ridiculous.' They admitted that 'in the cities of Bengal there are a few Urdu speaking Muslims and most of them speak incorrect Urdu.' They branded 'their effort to impose corrupted Urdu upon the thirty million pure Bengali speaking Muslims as sheer madness.'[3]

No certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the form of language used by the Muslims of Bengal at any time of their history, but it can be deduced that they did not all speak the same language. The differences seem to be determined by two factors, geographical and social; and to a considerable extent these two coincide. A non-Bengali language, probably Hindustani, was used by upper-class Muslims who lived for the

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1. Al Eslām, vol.I,No.VII,Calcutta, 1915.
2. Op.cit., Vol.III.No.IV,Calcutta, 1917.
3. Islām Darśan, Vol.III,No.I,Calcutta, 1922.

most part in certain districts of Calcutta and its hinterland or in some other large cities; whereas the majority of the Muslim population which lived in the rural areas or which formed the middle and lower classes in the towns spoke a form of Bengali which was not always distinguishable, except in certain contexts of situation, from that employed by their Hindu neighbours.

Hindustani was mainly a spoken language in the first part of the 19th century in Bengal. Adam found that Hindustani was "never employed in the schools as the medium or instrument of written instruction."[1] He therefore suggested to the government to maintain Persian as a language of instruction for the upper-class Muslims.[2] Perhaps the upper-class Muslims knew both Urdu and Persian "but preferred to write Persian".[3] The prestige of Hindustani as a written language was not high in the early 19th century even in Calcutta, and for that reason the first Hindustani paper Jām-i-Jahān Nūmā, published from Calcutta in 1822 did not continue more than three months after which it was replaced by a Persian issue.[4] This seems to be proof that Hindustani

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1. Adam,W.,op.cit.,p.76.
2. Ibid.,p.214.
3. Bulletin of the School of Oriental & African Studies, Vol.XVIII,No.3.,London,1956.
4. Ibid.

had not yet become established as a literary language.

Mention needs to be made of another dialect which was current to a limited extent in the Calcutta area. It is known as khoṭṭa. Its origin is not yet known, neither has any attempt been made to describe it in linguistic terms, but it is obvious to even a superficial examination that it is compounded of Bengali and Hindustani elements. It has been described as a 'bastard' growth. Its origin may be ascribed to either of two processes, or perhaps to both. Only a linguistic description will make clear which. It may have developed from the attempt made by Hindustani speakers in the cities of west Bengal to acquire a working knowledge of Bengali, or from an attempt of Bengali-speaking servants of Hindustani households to acquire sufficient Hindustani to enable them to communicate with their employers. In either case it was a linguistic compromise necessitated by the existence of a mixed language community. Ṭhak Cācā's language, already referred to, may be taken as a sample of it, in spite of certain intentional exaggerations. In his case it may have been prompted by social pretensions. Those who used khoṭṭa came to feel that it was a socially superior dialect to Bengali.

It is possible, however, that it had a longer history in Bengal than is usually assumed. Many Muslims from Upper

India, Persia and other Middle East countries came to Bengal from the beginning of the Muslim rule. "Wandering saints and preachers had been used to visit Bengal long before the Mughal conquest. But this stream became ampler in volume after annexation of the province to the empire of Delhi."[1] During Moghal rule Bengal was exposed to the Persian and Hindustani languages and cultures. Bengalis were learning Persian and even cultivating Persian literature. "In the 18th century there was a fairly prolific crop of Sufi verses written in Persian in Bengal."[2] Many scholarly Muslims from Upper India 'made their homes in this rich province' and 'religious teachers, Sufi philosophers and religious mendicants' used to visit Bengal frequently and many of them lived there permanently. The wealth of medieval Bengal always "attracted from abroad passing scholars in Arabic, in search of some less crowded market for their talents." The vast expansion of the sea-born trade of Bengal 'in the middle of the 17th century' increased the oceanic communication with Persia, Arabia and other Middle East countries. 'A voyage from Bandar Abbas or Bosra to Hugli was much cheaper and easier than the land journey across upper India'. Persian

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1. Sarkar, J.N. The History of Bengal, Vol. II, Dacca University, 1948, p.224.
2. Ibid., p.224.

Shiās from all walks of life who were coming to Bengal found Hugli a favourable place for their settlement. "This immigration of eminent Persians into Bengal was accelerated when in the late 17th century the Safavi royal house of Persia fell into rapid moral decay, and misgovernment and official tyranny made life in the homeland intolerable to many a worthy son of Iran."[1]

Thus it is found that large numbers of Muslims were immigrating to Bengal in the medieval period. Their language was not Bengali but it is expected that in the course of their stay in Bengal, either temporarily or permanently they adopted some Bengali words and used to speak to the people of Bengal in a language which was a mixture of Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words and forms with some Bengali.

It has been observed that the poets who introduced and developed Dobhāṣī diction in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries belonged to the western part of Bengal, i.e. Calcutta and places adjacent to it.[2] In the 18th and 19th centuries there developed a literary centre of Muslim poets in the

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1. Sarkar, J.N. op.cit., p.224.
2. See Chapter III.

pargana of Bhurśuṭ,[1] which is not far from Calcutta and near to Hugli, an important port in medieval Bengal. The poet Bhārat Candra and the two most famous 18th century poets of Dobhāṣī literature Garibullāh and Hāmjā, belonged to the Bhurśuṭ pargana. It is likely that the influence of the growing city of Calcutta and the old port of Hugli had much to do with the growth and development of Dobhāṣī literature in the 18th century.

The presence in Dobhāṣi diction of Perso-Arabic and Hindustani vocabulary elements and of some grammatical forms, verbs and pronouns from Hindustani, has been noted in Chart II. The constituents of Dobhāṣī cannot be compared with those of any of the spoken dialects which were employed by Bengali Muslims, because evidence of these dialects is not available. Certain limited conclusions may however be deduced on practical grounds. Nothing can be said on the noun content of the vocabulary of either Dobhāṣī or the spoken dialects, but it is unlikely that day to day speech could tolerate uncertainty with regard to common pronominal and verbal forms. The presence of āmār and merā alternatives etc. in Dobhāṣī presents no problem to the reader who knows

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1. Sen,S. Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās, vol.I,(2nd edition),Calcutta, 1948, p.919.

the diction, but it would create practical problems for the speaker. The difference here is clearly that between a literary and a colloquial diction, and there is little doubt that Dobhāṣī, which by the time of Garibullāh had become to a large extent standardised, must be regarded as a literary diction, which in the course of time had lost contact with the spoken dialects from which it originally sprang.

CHAPTER XII

The Tradition of Literary Languages in India.

Sufficient has already been said to justify the hypothesis that whatever its origin Dobhāṣī, as we know it, is a literary diction, which had become stereotyped as such at a fairly early date. There is no essential linguistic difference between the language of Ġaribullāh in the 18th century and that used by certain Hindu poets in the 17th century; neither has there been any significant change since his time. Though we cannot prove it, it is reasonable to assume that the mixed language spoken by the Muslims of Bengal underwent change from age to age; but Dobhāṣī once fixed seems not to have undergone such change. This phenomenon is not an exception in India, where, as the following paragraphs illustrate, there is a long tradition of literary languages, which bear some affinity to the languages of contemporary speech but which cannot be regarded as ever having been identical with them.

India[1] has a long tradition of literary composition in languages, which were almost certainly never spoken by the

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1. By India and Indian here we mean the country before independence in 1947.

people at large. These languages were artificial literary languages cultivated by certain exclusive social classes, or by the theologians and poets of certain cults, sects or religion. Often they bore traces of certain spoken dialects or languages, though not always sufficiently to determine their geographical origins. Many remained in use for a thousand years or more, and all of them long after the language or languages from which they may have been derived.had ceased to be spoken. It will be our purpose in the following pages to discuss, as far as is known, the origin and development of the most important of these artificial literary languages, so as to illustrate the length and strength of this tradition in which the Dobhāṣī diction grew in Bengal.

The first important artifical language of India is Vedic. It is a language which flourished throughout almost the whole of Northern India for more than a thousand years from approximately 1500 B.C. to 200 B.C.[1] Vedic may have originated from one Aryan dialect or from a mixture of several, but in the form in which we have it, it was never a spoken language. "Even in its earliest phase Vedic cannot be regarded as a popular tongue, but is rather an artificially archaic dialect, handed down from one generation to the other within

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1. Macdonell, A.A. A History of Sanskrit Literature, London, 1900, p.8

the class of priestly singers".[1] Moreover Vedic admitted "forms of other dialects as well, specially when towards the end of the Rig-Vedic period the mass of Vedic hymns became the common property of most Aryan tribes".[2] Thus Vedic may be called a mixed language of literature drawn from various Aryan dialects.

The second important artifical language is Sanskirt. Monier Williams defines the word Sanskrit, as applied to the language as "refined, highly wrought speech".[3] This language "was used and studied by the followers of Vedic faith from Gandhāra to Benaras and Patliputra. Patañjali in the second century B.C. describes it as the language of the 'siṣta' or cultured people, chiefly Brahmans of Āryâvarta".[4] By a gradual process of change, it evolved as a literary language from Vedic "but not in conformity with the natural development which appears in living languages".[5] The phonetic condition of the Sanskrit

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1. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., p.20
2. Chatterji, S.K. The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1926, p.34
3. Monier, W.M. Sanskrit - English Dictionary, Oxford, 1899, S.V.P. 1120 Macdonell defines it "to be called Sanskrit, the 'refined' or 'elaborate' (saṃskrita, literally 'put together')". op.cit., p.22 S.N.Dasgupta and S.K.De defines, "the word Sanskrit means purified and well-ordered". A History of Sanskrit Literature, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1947, Preface, p.VI.
4. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.50.
5. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., p.21

language remains the same as that of the earliest Vedic but it is "more modern and less complex" and "the changes in the language were mainly due to the regulating efforts of the grammarians, which were more powerful in India than anywhere else owing to the early and exceptional development of grammatical studies in the country".[1] The Sanskrit language was analysed in great detail and reduced to a stereotype by the great grammarian Pāṇini towards the end of the fourth century B.C. He "gave this new language a fixity for all time".[2] It remained an artificial language used in religious, philosophic and literary writing for more than two thousand years.[3]

The third important literary language is Pali. During the whole of the Old Indo-Aryan period[4] There existed a vernacular, descended from a Vedic dialect and remaining

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1. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., p.21
2. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.51
3. Macdonell, A.A. India's Past, Oxford, 1927, p.56
4. S.K.Chatterji's classification of the different historial phases in the development of Indian languages, laid down in The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language is useful and has been employed in this Chapter. Chatterji's historical analysis is as follows.(a) Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) period (circa 1500 B.C.to 477 B.C.). (b) Middle Indo Aryan (MIA) period (circa 600 B.C. to 1,000 A.C.) 'of which 600 B.C. to 200 B.C. would be the early or First MIA stage, 200 B.C. to 200 A.C., the transitional MIA stage, 200 A.C. to 500 or 600 A.C. the second MIA stage and 600 A.C. to 1000 A.C. the third or Late MIA stage'. (c) New Indo-Aryan (NIA) period (after 1000 A.C.) 'The first few centuries after 1000 A.C. would be an Old NIA period, during which the NIA languages enter into life", Vol.I, p.17

parallel with Sanskrit, as the vehicle of Buddhism and bearing the designation of Prakrit".[1] Prakrit was "much simpler than Sanskrit both in sound and grammar",[2] and had many dialects. Pali is not only a "very important and early Prakrit"[3] but is regarded as "the oldest literary form of Prakrit".[4] It seems to have been established as a literary language "during the transitional MIA period (200 B.C. to 200 A.C.) retaining, however, a generally archaic (i.e. early MIA) type".[5] It became the religious and philosophical language of Buddhism. The original home of Pali was not, for a long time, known with certainty. Macdonell states that "its original home is still uncertain".[6] Grierson suggests that it originated from a North-Western dialect. Edgerton observes: "Pali, the sacred language of Southern Buddhism was a North India Middle Indic. It was certainly the dialect spoken in one of the

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1. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., p.59
2. Basham, A.L. The Wonder that was India, London, 1954, p.391
3. Basham, A.L. Ibid., p.391
4. Macdonell, A.A. Ibid., 59
5. Chatterji, S.K. Ibid., p.57
6. Macdonell, A.A. A History of Sanskrit Literature, ~~London,~~ London, 1900, p.25

localities to which early missionaries carried Buddhism and where thriving Buddhist centres were established. Its original home has been much disputed in the past, nowadays it has come to be rather generally held that it was the region of Ujjayinī".[1] Basham states that "Pali which became the language of the Sthavira Vādin Buddhists" came from "a dialect which was probably spoken in the region of Sānchī and Ujjayinī".[2] Sukumar Sen suggests that Pali "was used as a kind of lingua franca from one end to the other of Aryan-speaking India", and was "developed in Malwa (Ujjain Bhilsā region) which was a centre not only of commerce and foreign contact but was a hub of religion and culture as well".[3] The numerous and wide spread rock and pillar inscriptions of Aśoka, written in Pali, indicate that it was widely known throughout India as early as the third century B.C. After the fifth century it "entered into a caree r of artificial literary existence in India, Ceylon and later in Burma (among the Mōns and Burmese) and in Siam, which can be compared only with that of Sanskrit".[4]

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1. Edgerton, F. Buddhists Hybrid Sanskrit, Banaras Hindu University 1954, p.61
2. Basham, A.L. op.cit., p.391
3. Sen, S. His tory of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.2
4. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.58

Thus Pali, though it presumably originated from a regional dialect, has survived as an all-India artifical literary language. It was also used "by persons whose mother-tongue was not Indo-Aryan",[1] many of whom lived outside the Indian sub-continent.

Buddhist Sanskrit, recently renamed Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, is another very important example of a mixed and artificial literary language in used in ancient India. It was developed by Buddhists and Jains. It consists of a peculiar mixture of Prakrit and Sanskrit, and volumes of canonical works in both prose and poetry were composed in it.[2] Chatterji sees the development of the language as occurring between the second and third century A.D. According to him, Buddhist Sanskrit was employed for administrative as well as religious purposes e.g., in the chanceries of Kings and in the public recording of events. He writes: "The Buddhists for a time (2nd century B.C - 3rd century A.C.) almost side by side with their literary work in Pali, sought to approximate the Prakrits they were familiar with to Sanskrit as used by the Brahmans, and this resulted in the curious dialect called Gāthā

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.2
2. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., pp.25-26

or Mixed Sanskrit or Buddhist Sanskrit from its very nature a most artificial mix-up, often with false Sanskritisation of Prakrit forms; and this is the language which is found in works like the 'Lalita-Vistara', the 'Mahā-vastu' and the 'Divyavadān'. The same thing was done in the Chanceries of Kings and in the public recording of events, as is evidenced from inscriptions of the period."[1]

Winternitz calls this language 'mixed Sanskrit'[2] but Edgerton used the term 'Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit', because of its artificial combination of Prakrit dialects with Sanskrit. He observes: "the name Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit is my invention. Most people either speak of it simply as 'Sanskrit' or at most 'Buddhist Sanskrit', which seems to me unfortunate, becuase it implies that it is a kind of Sanskrit, where as it can properly be called only a 'hybrid', primarily and originally not Sanskrit at all but Middle Indic, only secondarily and imperfectly Sanskritized".[3]

Initially the Buddhists and Jains ignored Sanskirt, preferring the use of Pali and Prakrit for all purposes. But as time went on, a desire to utilize the high social prestige

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1. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.53
2. Winternitz, M. A History of Indian Literature, Vol.I, p.83 (translated edition, Calcutta, 1927 (translated by S.Jha
3. Edgerton, F. op.cit., p.4

of Sanskrit for their own ends came upon them and they "endeavoured to acquire a knowledge of Sanskrit. This led to the formation of an idiom which, being in the main Prakrit, was made to resemble the old language by receiving Sanskrit endings and undergoing other adaptations".[1] Thus they consciously tried to make their language "look more like Sanskrit, the socially respected language of their brahmin neighbours". This Sanskritization as time went on, increased but "it never became complete".[2] This curious mixed language "has fully shown how much even an artificial language can do. The entire canonical texts of the Mahāyana-school of Buddhism were rendered in this highly artificial Mischsprache".[3]

Our discussion of the nature and origin of Buddhists Hybrid Sanskrit has carried us forward into the Middle Indo-Aryan period. Before proceeding with our discussion of the linguistic events of this complex period, let us first recapitulate briefly. We have seen that the language of the Vedas was archaic, and that in the words of Grierson it shows "several signs of dialectic differences. As a literary language the form of speech preserved by them gradually developed into what is known as classical Sanskrit. On the other hand, as a group of cognate vernaculars, it took a different course in the mouths of the people, and branched out into different streams of living tongues as the Aryans spread and gradually

1. Macdonell, A.A. op.cit., p.25
2. Edgerton, F. op.cit., p.7
3. Sen, S. A History of Brajabuli Literautre, Calcutta University, 1935, p.3

advanced down the Gangetic Valley".[1] The dialectal problems unquestionably continued in the later phase of the old Indo-Aryan period, but the only evidence available is that contained in literary texts. Only by deduction can we arrive at any conclusion with regard to the languages or dialects actually spoken by contemmporary people. By the time of Buddha (5th century B.C.) a number of dialects must have been spoken by the Aryan peoples of India and it is a reasonable assumption that the existence of these dialects was largely responsible for the dialectal condition of the Old Indo-Aryan languages which had developed by the third century B.C. This phase "is called Middle Indo-Aryan or in a broad sense Prakrit",[2] which means "'prakrita', i.e., the natural, unartificial language, as opposed to Sanskrit, 'saṃskrita', the polished, artificial language".[3]

Grierson has given a wider sense to Prakrit. He classifies the Prakrit languages in three main stages. The first stage is Primary Prakrit. Vedic and Sanskrit are its literary forms. The second stage is Secondary Prakrit. These are represented in Pali literature, in the various Prakrits

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1. Grierson, G.A. A Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.V, part I, Calcutta, 1903, p.4
2. Sen.S, History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.I
3. Grierson, G.A. oncit., Vol.I, part I, p.121

of grammarians, in the dialectal languages of dramas and in Apabhraṁsa Literatures. The third stage is Tertiary Prakrit. The modern vernaculars of India are included in this stage.[1] This classification of Prakrit is rejected by A.B.Keith. He observes: "It may be doubted whether the terminology has sufficient merit to render it desirable to give it currency, because it observes the constant process of change and suggests that there are greater distinctions between the priods than do exist, while it does not allow a special place to a fundamental innovation which occurs with the period designed as secondary Prakrit".[2]

Chatterji, examining the evolution of Aryan languages, finds it difficult to establish the inter-relationship of the various Middle Indo-Aryan languages. He observes: "the Prakits (and Apabhraṁśas) are literary and to a great extent artificial languages, standing to some extent off from the general current of development of MIA as spoken".[3] He follows "the almost universally accepted hypothesis" as the "missing links" between the NIA languages and OIA.dialects, the derivation from one kind of "spoken Prakrit" of a "number of

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1. Grierson, G.A. op.cit., pp.21-25
2. Keith, A.B. A History of Sanskrit Literature, Oxford, 1928, p.27
3. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.21

current NIA languages and dialects grouping themselves together by virtue of common traits".[1] It is most probable that successive forms of Prakrit with many regional variations must have continued in use for centuries as the spoken languages of Aryan-speaking India. "All that we know about them is founded on the literature in which they have survived and the grammars written to illustrate that literature".[2] The languages of this literature and these grammars cannot be accepted as the vernaculars of the people. They are "altogether artificial products suited for that artificial literature".[3] Thus the Prakrits, presumably derived from various dialects "became fixed exactly as Sanskrit had become fixed in the Brahmanical schools and remained unchanged as a literary form of speech for many generations",[4] This artificiality of Prakrit poses problems to the students of the history of modern languages including Bengali, because the changes which must have taken place in the spoken languages are not clearly reflected in the literary dictions which are the languages of the texts. We find the term Prakrit associated with particular local names, such as Saurasenī, Mahārāṣṭrī,

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1. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.22
2. Grierson, G.A. op.cit., pp.122-3
3. Grierson, G.A. Ibid., p.123
4. Grierson, G.A. Ibid., p.123

Māgḥadhī etc., but whatever else these regional Prakrits may be they are not "really the spoken language of those parts of the country. What we have are the standardised artificial forms of Prakrit which were used for the purpose of literature".[1]

Another stage in the development of the Middle Indo-Aryan languages is that called Apabraṁśa, "a word meaning 'corrupt speech' or 'decayed speech'."[2] It is from the meaning Apabhraṁśa dialects that the modern languages of Northern India eventually developed. The later stage of this language is variously known as Laukika or Apabhraṣṭa or Avahaṭṭha.[3] The Apabhraṁśa languages, as found in various texts, do not represent the spoken languages of the people. Like Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, this language was, in the form in which we have it, an artificial and fashionable literary diction. But some forms of spoken Apabhraṁśa gave birth to the New Indo-Aryan languages, S.Sen observes: "Like Sanskrit, Apabhraṁśa - Avahaṭṭha was a literary language, and in the available records it shows remarkably little local variation, practically the same form of the language appears

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1. Das Gupta, S.N. and De, S.K. A History of Sanskrit Literature, Vol.I, Calcutta University, 1947, p.CXX
2. Grierson, G.A. op.cit., p.124
3. Sen, S. op.cit., p.4

in poems written in Gujarat and in Bengal. But the spoken language conditioned by the regional linguistic and ethnic took up the different regional characteristics, culminating in the birth of the different regional New Indo-Aryan languages".[1]

Grierson describes the Apabhraṅśa as 'local variations of Prakrit' and based on various dialects of the people. He also constructed a scheme for the derivation of the New Indo-Aryan languages from the various local apabhraṅśas.[2] But Keith observes that "this theoretical scheme will not stand investigation, for the evidence of texts and even of the literature proves clearly that Apabhraṅśa has a different signification".[3] He advances a theory that Apabhraṅśa is a different language like Sanskrit or Prakrit. "The essential fact regarding Apabhraṅśa is that it is the collective term employed to denote literary languages not Sanskrit or Prakrit. Bhāmaha expressly gives this three-fold division, and Daṇḍin expressly says that Apabhraṅśa is the term applied to the idioms of the Ābhiras etc., When they appear in poetry. Guhasena of Valabhī, whose inscriptions have dates from A.D.559-69, is declared to have composed poems in three languages, Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhraṅśa".[4] Chatterji thinks that the Apabhraṅśas,

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.4.
2. Grierson, G.A. op.cit., pp.124-5.
3. Keith, A.B. op.cit., p.31.
4. Ibid., p.32.

as literary dictions, developed at the confluence of the Middle Indo-Aryan and New Indo-Aryan periods and that "these Aprabhraṅśas of literature are mainly based on hypothetical spoken Apabhraṅśas, in which the earlier Prakrits die and the Bhāṣās or modern Indo-Aryan languages have their birth".[1]

Though the sources of Apabhraṅśa are not known for certain the fact remains that this language, subject to local variations developed as an artificial literay diction. Indian grammarians describe about twenty seven types of Apabhraṅśas, e ach named after the region in which it was employed. But, as Grierson points out "they were not actual vernaculars of the countries after which they were named is plain from these descriptions. These Apabhraṅśas were found even in countries of which the local language was Dravidian".[2]

One of the regional variations of Apabhraṅśa in its later phase, Avahaṭṭha, was current in North East India, i.e., Bihar and Bengal. The Bengali language is presumed to have originated from this Apabhraṅśa-Avahaṭṭha.[3] "Some lingering traces of Avahaṭṭha have been found in the language of the

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1. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.17
2. Grierson, G.A. op.cit., p.124 (footnote)
3. Sen, S. op.cit., p.4

Caryāpada",[1] supposed to have been composed during "the period 950-1200 A.C.".[2] This can be claimed as the oldest specimen of the Bengali language.

The history of the Bengali language may be divided into three stages, Old, Middle and Modern. According to S.Sen "the Old Bengali stage roughly covered the period 950-1350. The Middle Bengali stage stretched from 1350 to 1800, and the Modern Bengali stage has commenced from 1800".[3]

During the Middle Bengali period an artificial mixed diction was used as the vehicle of some of the most beautiful expressions of the poetic spirit in Bengali literature. This diction is called Braja-bulī, which means speech of Vraja. It "became the conventional jargon for conventional Vaiṣṇava sentiment. -- Varaja in Vrindāvan was traditionally supposed to have been the place where Krisna and Rādhā lived in the 'dwāpara' age and Vrajabuli (the language of Vraja) came to be popularly regarded as the language in which Krisna and Rādhā spoke".[4] The poems composed in it mainly describe the boyhood of Kṛṣṇa and his love for Rādhā in Vraja dhām, near Mathurā. The diction is a mixture of Maithili and Bengali

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., pp.5-6
2. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.123
3. Sen, S. Ibid., pp.4-5
4. Ghose, J.C. Bengali Literature, Oxford, 1948, p.55

with a mixture of Western Hindi. It developed and was cultivated mainly in Bengal, though some "Vaishnava poets from Assam and a few devotees from Orissa wrote in it".[1] It is fairly generally assumed that Brajabulī came to Bengal because of the popularity of a poet by the name of Bidyāpati, who wrote songs on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme in Maithili. Mithilā was a centre of learning during the middle ages and students from Bengal followed the custom of going there in search of learning. "Sanskrit students, especially in Nyāya and Smṛti, had to resort to Mithila. When they returned home they brought with them, along with their Sanskrit learning, popular vernacular songs",[2] which were current in Mithilā and said to be composed by Bidyāpati. Grierson supports the idea that Brajabulī language was created by the influence of the songs of Bidyāputi and by the effort made by subsequent poets to imitate him. He observes: "Songs purporting to be by Bidyāpati have become as well-known in Bengali households as the Bible is in an English one. --- To a Bengali, Bidyāpati wrote in a different and strange though cognate language, and his words were hard "to be understanded of the people" so at first a few of his hymns were twisted and contorted, lengthened out

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.5
2. Sen, S. A History of Brajabuli Literature, Calcutta University 1935, p.1

and curtailed, in the procrustean bed of the Bengali language and metre, into a kind of bastard language neither Bengali nor Maithilī."[1] The argument in favour of the influence of Bidyāpati on the origin of Brajabulī language is also given by Chatterji in the following words: "Vidyāpati's songs on the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa exerted a tremendous influence on the Vaiṣṇava lyric of Bengal. They spread into Bengal, and were admired and imitated by Bengali poets from the 16th century downwards, and the attempts of the people of Bengal to preserve the Maithilī language, without studying it properly, led to the development of a curious poetic jargon, a mixed Maithilī and Bengali with a few Western Hindi forms, which was widely used in Bengal in composing poems on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa".[2]

However, attractive a theory it may be that the songs of Bidyāpati were sung in Bengal and the desire of Bengali poets to emulate him in their own songs resulted in the creation of mixed diction, it cannot be proved for lack of evidence. It is known that there was a Bihari poet of the name of Bidyāpati living in the 15th century and that he wrote poems which were popular and delighted Caitanya.[3] These poems cannot

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1. Grierson, G.A. An Introduction to the Maithilī Language of North Bihar containing A Grammar, Christomathy Vocabulary, part II, Calcutta, 1882, pp.34-5
2. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.103
3. Kṛṣṇa Dās Kabiraj in his work Caitanya Caritāmṛta, a biographical book on Caitanya (composed sometime between 1575 and 1595) says that the songs of Bidyāpati, Candī Dās and Jaya Deb used to delight Caitanya: "bidyāpati candī dās śrīgita govinda) eitin gīte karaye prabhur ānanda//"

today be definitely identified and therefore a theory based on their influence, however attractive and plausible it may sound, cannot be accepted in its entirety. What is known is that after the death of Caitanya some of his disciples and their successors wrote lyric poems on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme, which formed the centre of the cult established by Caitanya. These poems were written in both Brajabuli and Bengali. According to Sen the earliest known poem in Brajabuli is the work of a poet who was awarded the title Yaśorāj Khān by his patron Husain Shah, King of Bengal (1493-1519) at whose court he lived.[1] The real name of the poet is not known for certain. According to Sen he is supposed to have been a Hindu and his name "seems to have been Dāmodar Sen".[2]

The greatest of the post Caitanya poets, Govinda Dās wrote in Brajabulī only, but others such as Jñān Dās and Locan Dās wrote on the same theme and in the same style in both Bengali and Brajabulī.

Once established in central Bengal the vogue of Brajabulī spread eastward as far as the court of Arakan. Daulat Kāji, a 17th century poet of this court wrote a number of lyrics in Brajabulī in his work Satīmaṛnā Lor candranī. "He was the

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1. Sen, S. op.cit., p.2
2. Sen, S. History of Bengali Literature, New Delhi, 1960, p.70

poet who proved that even without the love-lore of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Vraja buli could be effectively employed in Bengali".[1] Kāji's great successor, the poet Ālāol, also used Brajabulī in some of his lyric poems on the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa theme in the 17th century.

The popularity of Brajabulī with the strong tradition of Vaiṣṇava poetry lingered on into the 19th century. Rabindra Nath Tagore used this diction in his poetical hoax, Bhānu Simha Ṭhākur. He composed a series of lyrics during 1881 to 1885 in Brajabulī. Chatterji rightly remarks - "Brajabuli poetry is a standing example of the extent to which an entirely artificial dialect can be utilised by a whole people, for poetic exercise, and its position in Bengal can be compared with that of Śaurasenī Apabhraṁśa and Avahaṭṭha outside the Midland in the late Middle Indo-Aryan and early New Indo-Aryan periods".[2]

It may be clear from the above observations that in India there is a long and continuous tradition of the use of artificial literary languages. The consensus of opinion of the authorities seems to be that many of these languages were of mixed origin, and that some at least, as for example Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit, may have been deliberately evolved for

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1. Haq, M.E. Muslim Bengali Literature, Karachi, 1957, p.146
2. Chatterji, S.K. op.cit., p.104

specific reasons and purposes. The growth of Dobhāṣī as a literary diction is, therefore, no innovation in the processes which form the tradition of literature in India. Like the other literary languages before it, it became stereotyped in respect of both vocabulary and grammatical forms, and once fixed it changed very little.

CHAPTER XIII

Historical summary.

The problem of the origin of Dobhāṣi as a literary diction must be studied against the background of the history of Bengal. It is reasonable to assume that if the Muslims had not invaded Bengal and settled there Dobhāṣī could never have come into existence. Whatever the literary stimuli and other factors which contributed to its later development, its origin must be sought in the mixed culture which grew from the living together of different peoples.

The first Muslim invaders of India reached Bengal about 1200 A.D., though it is probable that they did not reach the east and north-east parts of the region until about a century later. A certain amount is known of the political and religious history of the first two centuries after the invasion, but nothing is known directly about the literary history of the period, because no literary compositions have survived. No extant composition can with certainty be dated much, if at all, before 1400 A.D. This however, should not be taken to imply that no poets were at work between 1200 and 1400 A.D. The developed form of literary works which have survived from the 15th century suggest that there was no long break in creative activity. Sukumar Sen is right in

his statement that "the forms and the contents of the Middle Bengali narrative and lyrical poetry presuppose uninterrupted cultivation for centuries".[1] Nevertheless we can know only by deduction what was being composed at that time. The significant fact however is that by the time literary evidence began to be available the Muslims and the indigenous peoples of Bengal had had some 200 years in which to work out a modus vivendi. Court patronage of the arts had begun, and a number of Hindu poets were writing under the encouragement of Muslim rulers. Clearly too the linguistic adjustment needed to ensure intercommunication had already taken place.

It is at this point in history that a diction compounded of Perso-Arabic and Bengali vocabulary elements first found its way into the literature of the province. The introduction of such a diction into poetical works presupposes the prior existence of forms of colloquial speech, in certain areas at any rate, which themselves contained a similar if not identical mixture of vocabulary elements. Poetry at the time was composed to be recited. Its subjects were of popular interest; and for that reason we can assume that the poets would not have experimented with a diction unless

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1. Sen,S. History of Bengali Literature, New.Delhi,1960, p.39.

they were sure that some of their audience understood it. This argument cannot be proved because no samples of the speech of the age in question have survived, but it is a reasonable one. Muslim rulers and their officers, who spoke a form of Persian, and their subjects, most of whom spoke Bengali, obviously had to talk to one another; and it is most likely that they did so by means of a mixed language to which both parties contributed words from their own languages. The language of administration at the higher levels was Persian; but administration had also to operate at lower levels at which the language in current use was Bengali. It is natural that certain words of administrative and religious relevance for which there were no Bengali equivalents should be received into Bengali as loan words. Thus in the course of time Bengalis in certain areas must have learned a form of Bengali in which there were a number of Persian words. Converts to Islam would also have taken over a number of words from Arabic. On the other hand Muslim officials must have found it necessary to acquire a certain amount of Bengali, even though what they spoke presumably had a strong Persian flavour. So arose a mixed lingua franca. We do not know the proportion of Perso-Arabic to Bengali words it contained, though it is probable that the proportion was not stable; neither do we know how many people regularly

spoke it, or where; but it is clear that by about 1400 it was sufficiently stabilised to have formed the basis of literary experimentation. And in this experimentation with a mixed diction lies the Origin of Dobhāṣī.

It has been stated in earlier chapters that the first occurrences of Dobhāṣī were few and sporadic; that they are confined to contexts which involve the participation of Muslim characters, princes, officials, faqirs, etc.; and that the only poets who experimented with Dobhāṣī were Hindus, some of them Brahmans. It may at first sight seem surprising that this mixed diction was not used by any Muslim poet before the 18th century.

It is probable however that this was a result of the structure of Muslim society. The lower classes, many of whom were originally converts from Hinduism, spoke Bengali and being poor they were almost certainly illiterate too. The upper and educated classes spoke Persian, and read chiefly Persian and Arabic. Evidence has been cited in an earlier chapter to show that there was a tendency to despise Bengali, and to regard Persian and Arabic as the only languages worthy of being used for literary purposes. Muslim poets who did use Bengali felt it necessary to justify their doing so. In circumstances where so many poets were supported by courtly patrons, it is possible that Hindu poets, whose mother tongue was Bengali,

felt that an occasional attempt to write in a partially Persianised Bengali would redound to their credit in the eyes of their patrons; whereas Muslim poets, especially those who claimed to know Persian, would tend to regard it as being in their best interests to write in that language. They could justify the employment of Bengali as the language of the major part of the population, but such arguments in their case would not be so appropriately applicable to Dobhāṣī. All this of course is pure conjecture, but it has some degree of probability; and the fact remains that until the 18th century no Muslim poet used Dobhāṣī.

A survey of the centres of literary activity in Bengal shows that Dobhāṣī was employed in certain areas but not in others. Garibullāh and Bhāratcandra Rāy both belonged to the Hugli district, to the north and west of Calcutta. Earlier poets had lived there too. It would seem therefore that mixed dictions, including Dobhāṣī, were fairly well established in that area. In Chittagong however, which was the home of Daulat Kāzi and Ālāol, the most important Muslim poets of the medieval period, there is no evidence that mixed diction of this type was used at all. Both Daulat Kāzi and Ālāol wrote exclusively in Bengali, except for occasional passages of Brajabuli, even though the themes they developed were of non-Bengali origin. In other parts of east Bengal, and in the

northern districts, there are no examples of mixed diction in the works of Muslim poets. It would seem therefore that a direct connection exists between the areas in which Dobhāṣī texts are found and the distribution of the different classes of Muslim society. Halhed and Yates bear testimony to the currency of a mixed jargon in Calcutta and its surrounding districts, whereas Adam's educational surveys lead one to suppose that in the north and east of Bengal Hindus and Muslims alike spoke Bengali and learned it together in school.

Earlier analysis, supported by the charts, demonstrates that in the 15th and 16th centuries Dobhāṣī writers drew upon Persian and Arabic for certain words of the noun category, but retained Bengali verbs, pronouns and invariables exclusively. In the 17th century however verbs and pronouns of Hindustani origin begin to appear. It was suggested that this addition to the vocabulary marks the divergence of Dobhāṣī from the language of speech. Verbal and pronominal diversity is an artificial literary feature. When Garibullāh, the first Muslim poet to write in Dobhāṣī, adopted it as the exclusive language of his poetry, it was obviously firmly established as a literary language, as was the case with Brajabuli when Govindadās composed his Vaiṣṇava lyrics. Garibullāh had no inhibitions about using any word form from either language group. Bengali verbs and pronouns feature side by side with

their Hindustani counterparts; and hybrids are found in which Hindustani nouns and verbs are used with Bengali inflections and vice versa. Dobhāṣī was by now free to develop according to its own rules. It was clearly Garibullāh's high prestige which was responsible for the acceptance of Dobhāṣī as an established literary diction. Saiẏad Hāmjā, Garibullāh's younger contemporary and successor, first wrote in Bengali. It was only when he agreed to complete an unfinished work of Garibullāh's, that he went over to Dobhāṣī. From that time on works in Dobhāṣī by Muslim poets began to proliferate, as Long's catalogue so clearly demonstrates.

In the 19th century, Muslim poets were able to choose between two languages, Bengali and Dobhāṣī. Some wrote in one, others in the other. There are many examples of works in both, except, it should be noted, that Muslim poets tended in their Bengali to avoid the excesses of Sanskritisation which were becoming fashionable in certain schools of Hindu writers. It may well be, as some critics have suggested, that some Muslim poets were prompted to write in Dobhāṣī as a counterblast to the Sanskritic Bengali which the pandits were advocating. There may also be some truth in Enamul Haq's contention that the popularity of Dobhāṣī in certain quarters was not unconnected with the Ohābi and Fārāẏeji movements in Bengal

though the leadership of these movements was mostly in the hands of Persian, Arabic and Hindustani scholars. As the Muslim community found it increasingly necessary to defend its position against the Hindus, who had been far quicker to avail of the facilities created by western education, it is not improbable that they saw in Dobhāṣī a means of declaring and confirming their separate identity. Whether this is true or not, it is an historical fact that up to the 18th century Hindu poets had not been ashamed to write in Dobhāṣī, whereas from the 19th century onwards they wrote exclusively in Bengali. Dobhāṣī became a literary language of the Muslims, and once it was established as such it began to be assailed by certain pandits as 'unintelligible' and not worthy of the name of literature, a trend of opinion which is still alive in our own day.

It is regrettable that attitudes to Dobhāṣī literature should be determined by political and communal considerations. Much has been written in that language. Some of it, admittedly, is of a low standard, but some of it has considerable literary quality. Nevertheless, whatever its standards, it is right that Dobhāṣī poetry should be judged by criteria which derive from literature, and from that only.

Chart II

Statistical analysis of the words in the works of Garibullah and Hāmjā

Name of the work, author, date and portion	Total No. of Words.	Perso-Arabic of Hindu-stani words.	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Prounoun	Verb	Adjective, Adverb, etc.
Amirhāmjār puthi by Fakir Garibullāh, approx.1765, 60 couplets from the beginning of the story	792	347	275	10	14	48
Amirhāmjār puthi by Saiyad Hāmjā 1793-94 60 couplets from the beginning of the story	622	268	226	6	10	26

Chart III

Statistical analysis of the words in the prose writings between 1748 & 1873

Date	Passage	Total no. of words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words	Word Analysis			
				Noun	Pronoun	Verb	Adjective, Adverb etc.
1748	A	321	30	23	X	X	7
1778	B	59	26	23	X	X	3
1801	C	90	15	12	X	X	3
1806	D	70	19	19	X	X	X
1850	E	235	55	45	X	X	10
1858	F	87	41	31	X	X	10
1873	G	166	62	49	X	2	11

A - It is a private letter of a Hindu of Bengal. Mahārāj Nanda Kumār wrote this letter to his brother in 1748, quoted in Types of Early Bengali prose by S.R.Mitra, C.U.1922, pp.115-16
B - A petition dated 1778, quoted in A Grammar of Bengal Language by N.B.Halhed, Hoogly, 1778 p.20
C - Basu, R.R., Rājā pratāpāditya Caritra, Serampore, 1801, p.30.
D - Carey, W., Dialogues, Serampore, 1806, pp. 2 and 4.
E - A petition, quoted in 'A Collection of Bengali Petition,' Calcutta, 1869, pp.185-89.
F - Thomas, J., Dāyūder Jabbūrer Ketāb, Baptist Mission Press, 1858, p.2.
G - Sah, B. - Jaichānāmā, Calcutta, 1873, p.56. This is the self introduction of the poet in prose. The work is a Dobhāṣī work on mystic philosophy.

Chart IV

Statistical analysis of the words in the dialect

Muslims & Hindus

Dialects of Muslims of Bengal.

Passage	Total Words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Pro-Noun	Verb	Adj. Adv. etc.
A	162	67	38	X	3	26
B	218	28	20	×	1	7
C	218	30	21	×	1	8

Dialects of Hindus of Bengal.

Passage	Total Words	Perso-Arabic or Hindustani words	Word Analysis			
			Noun	Pro-Noun	Verb	Ad Ad et
D	128	5	4	X	X	1
E	218	4	3	×	×	1
F	218	8	6	×	1	1

A - This is the dialect of Ṭhak Cācā, a Muslim character in the novel Ālālergharer dulāl, (by P.C.Mitra,)and his wife. I have examined their dialect from the pages 202 and 215 of 'Basumati Sāhitya Mandir' publication of the novel. This novel was started publishing in a monthly journal in 1855. See Bāṅglā Sāhityer Itihās by Sukumar Sen,Vol. II, (3rd edition),Burdwan,1955, p.166.

B,C,E & F - These are the dialects produced by G.A.Grierson in his work Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.V,part I,Calcutta, 1903,pp.211,249,206 and 241 respectively. The dialects are from B-Mymensingh district, C - Noakhali district, E - Dacca district and F - Tippera district, and they are on the same subject.

D - This is the dialect of Mokṣadā, a Hindu lady and Becārām, a Hindu gentleman in the novel Ālālergharer dulāl. We have examined their dialect from the pages 162 and 203 of the said edition of the novel.

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